The Phaedo

ECHECRATES: Were you there in the prison, Phaedo, 57
when Socrates drank the poison,[1] or did you hear about it
from somebody else?
PHAEDO: I was there, Echecrates.
ECHECRATES: Then what did he say before he died? And
how did he die? I'd certainly like to find out. Hardly anyone
from Phlius goes to Athens any more, and no one from there
has come by for a long time. So we've really heard nothing b
about it, except that he drank the poison and died.
PHAEDO: Didn't you even hear how his trial turned out? 58
ECHECRATES: Yes, and we were surprised that his
execution seemed to be so long after the trial. Why was that,
Phaedo?
PHAEDO: It was just an accident, Echecrates. You see, on
the day before the trial the Athenians had wreathed the stern
of the ship they send to Delos.
ECHECRATES: What ship is that?
PHAEDO: The Athenians say it's the one Theseus used to
bring the "seven youths and seven maidens" to Crete and then
saved both them and himself.[2] When he sailed, they say, they b
made a vow to Apollo to send a sacred delegation to Delos
every year if the young people were spared. So every year
since, down to this very day, they send it to the god. And they
have a law that after the voyage begins, the city must be kept
pure and no one can be executed until the ship has reached
Delos and returned. Sometimes, if the winds go against them,

[1] **Hemlock,** the normal means of execution at Athens. The scene is set in Phlius, a small town in the Peloponnese. It was a center of Pythagorean philosophy and lay not far off the road from Athens to Elis, Phaedo's home town.

[2] **Theseus** was a legendary king of Athens. King Minos of Crete had imposed a tribute on Athens of "seven youths and seven maidens" to be fed to the Minotaur every nine years. Theseus sailed to Crete, slew the Minotaur, and freed the city from the tribute.

c that can take quite a while. The mission officially begins when the priest of Apollo wreathes the stern of the ship. And that, as I said, happened on the day before the trial. That's why Socrates sat in jail so long between his trial and execution.

ECHECRATES: What about his death, Phaedo? What was said and done, and which of his friends were there? Or wouldn't the authorities let them in—did he die bereft of friends?

d PHAEDO: Oh no, some were there—quite a few, in fact.

ECHECRATES: Please, Phaedo, tell us the whole thing as clearly as you can—if you have time, that is.

PHAEDO: Of course I have, and I'll try to recount it. I love to recall Socrates anyway, whether I'm speaking myself or listening to somebody else.

ECHECRATES: We're all as eager as you, Phaedo, so try to tell us everything as accurately as you can.

e PHAEDO: Well, my own experiences on that day were amazing. I didn't feel pity as though I were present at the death of a beloved friend. The man seemed so happy, Echecrates, in both his manner and speech, and he died so nobly and fearlessly that I realized he was going to Hades by a divine dispensation and would, if anyone, also fare well over
59 there. So I didn't feel much pity, as you might expect of someone in the presence of sorrow, or pleasure either, at our usual philosophical discussions—it was simply a strange experience: an unusual combination of pleasure mixed with pain at the thought that he was soon to die. Everyone there felt much the same. Now we would laugh and sometimes we'd cry, and Apollodorus certainly—but I suppose you
b know what he's like.[3]

ECHECRATES: Of course.

PHAEDO: Well, he certainly acted like that, and I was quite upset myself. So were the others.

ECHECRATES: Who all were there, Phaedo?

PHAEDO: Well, Apollodorus, of course. Others from Athens were Critobolus and his father Crito, Hermogenes, Epigenes, Aeschines, and Antisthenes. Ctesippus the Paeanian and Menexenus were there, and several other Athenians. I think Plato was sick.

ECHECRATES: Were there any foreigners?

[3] **This Apollodorus** is the narrator of the *Symposium*.

PHAEDO: Oh, yes. Simmias, Cebes, and Phaedondas from c
Thebes, and Eucleides and Terpsion from Megara.
ECHECRATES: What about Aristippus and Cleombrotus?
PHAEDO: They weren't there. I heard they were in Aegina.
ECHECRATES: Was there anyone else?
PHAEDO: I think that was about it.
ECHECRATES: Then why not tell us about the discussions?
PHAEDO: I'll try to tell it all from the beginning. The d
others and I had gone to visit him every day, and we would gather early in the morning at the court where he had been tried because it lay close to the prison. We would wait around there passing the time with each other until the prison opened, which wasn't very early. Then we'd go in and spend the rest of the day with Socrates. Well, that morning we had gathered even earlier than usual because when we had left the e
prison the evening before, we had heard that the ship from Delos was in. So we agreed to meet at the usual place as early as we could the next morning. When we got there, the watchman who usually let us in came out and told us to wait and not come in till he called. "The Eleven,"[4] he said, "are releasing Socrates and giving orders that today he must die." A little while later he returned and told us to come in. As we entered, we found Socrates already released and his wife—you 60
know Xanthippe—sitting there with him holding their child. When Xanthippe saw us, she broke out in laments and started to carry on the way women do. "Oh, Socrates," she cried, "this is the last time you'll talk with your friends." Socrates looked at Crito and said: "Crito, have someone bring her home."

Some of Crito's people led her out weeping and wailing. Socrates sat up on the cot, began rubbing and bending his leg, b
and said as he did: "How strange, gentlemen, is this thing that people call pleasure! How strangely related to its seeming opposite, pain: They refuse to occur in a man together, yet if you pursue and capture the one, you're nearly always forced to take the other too, as though they shared a single head. If Aesop had noticed them, I think he'd have c
composed a fable: how god, after attempting and failing to reconcile the two as they fought, joined their heads into one, so that wherever the one might appear, a little while later here

[4] **A board of** Athenian officials in charge of prisons and executions.

comes the other. That seems to be happening to me. My leg was hurting because of the bonds, and now pleasure shows up, tagging behind."

Cebes responded: "By Zeus, Socrates, it's a good thing you reminded me. Lots of people, including Evenus[5] just the
d other day, have been asking me about those poems you've composed by setting Aesop's fables and the Hymn to Apollo to music—what do you mean by composing now that you're here, when you never did it before? If you want me to have an answer for Evenus the next time he asks—and I know that he will—tell me what I should say."

"Why, the truth, Cebes: that I'm not trying to compete with
e him or his poems—I know that wouldn't be easy—but to check out the meaning of some dreams and to make amends in case this is the kind of music they've been directing me to compose. It's like this: The same vision has often come to me in my past life. It appears in different guises but always says the same thing: 'Socrates, make music and compose.' I used to think it was urging me to do what I was already doing, the
61 way people cheer on runners, because I was already practicing philosophy, the greatest music. But ever since my trial the festival of the god has kept me from dying, and it seemed to me that the dream might be charging me to compose ordinary music and that I ought not to disobey, but to do it, because it's safest not to leave until I've made amends
b by composing poems in obedience to the dream. So first I composed one to the god whose festival this is. Then, considering that to be a poet one mustn't compose facts but stories and that I'm no storyteller, I took the fables of Aesop, which I had with me because I knew them by heart, and began turning them into poetry. Tell that to Evenus, Cebes. Bid him farewell, and say if he's sensible, he'll follow me as quick as he
c can. I'm leaving today, it seems. So the Athenians command."

"What a thing to pass on to Evenus, Socrates!" said Simmias. "I've dealt with him often, and from what I can see, he won't willingly follow your advice at all."

"What?" said Socrates. "Isn't Evenus a philosopher?"

"I think he is," said Simmias.

[5] **A sophist** from Paros who taught excellence for five minas (*Apology* 20b). "Music" has a wider range of meaning in Greek than in English. It covers "poetry" and even "education," so that Socrates can call philosophy "the greatest music."

"Then he'll be willing, like any decent philosopher, though he probably won't use force on himself. They say that's unlawful." As he spoke, he put his feet on the floor and d
sat like that for the rest of the discussion.

"What do you mean, a philosopher will be willing to follow someone who's dying, but won't use force on himself?" asked Cebes.

"You and Simmias have been with Philolaus, Cebes. Didn't you ever hear about this from him?"

"Nothing very certain or clear, Socrates."

"Well, I also speak from hearsay. But there's no reason not to tell what I've heard. It's probably fitting for someone about to move over there to speculate and tell tales about what he e
thinks the move will be like. What else should one do in the time before sundown?"

"Why in the world do they say it's unlawful to kill yourself, Socrates? I did hear that from Philolaus when he was staying at Thebes, and I've heard it from others too, but never anything definite."

"You must be eager, Cebes—maybe you'll hear it. Though 62
perhaps it will surprise you if, of all things, this alone is absolute: if, unlike everything else for man, it never turns out to be better for some people to die than to live; and it may also surprise you that it's impious for these people—who would be better off dead—to do themselves the favor, and they have to wait for some benefactor to do it for them."

Cebes chuckled softly. "Zeus sakes!" he said, slipping into his own dialect.

"It does seem illogical that way," said Socrates, "but it may b
still make some sense. The secret tale—that we men are kept in a kind of guardhouse and mustn't try to escape—strikes me as rather grand and hard to fathom. But that the gods have charge of us and we form one of their possessions—that seems right to me, Cebes. How about you?"

"It seems right to me, too," he said.

"Well, if one of your possessions tried to kill itself without c
any indication from you that you wanted it to, wouldn't you be angry and punish it if you could?"

"Of course."

"So in this way it doesn't seem so illogical not to try to kill yourself until a god sends some necessity, like the one now sent to me."

"That much seems reasonable," said Cebes. "But what you

just said, that philosophers will be lightly willing to die,
d seems strange, Socrates, if what we just said is right and a god has charge of us as his possessions. It makes no sense for the brightest men not to resent leaving a service in which they're supervised by the best of existing things, the gods. They surely wouldn't believe they could take better care of themselves if set free. A thoughtless man might think he
e should run away from his master and therefore attempt a senseless escape without stopping to consider that one oughtn't to flee the good but stay with it. But a man with sense would probably desire always to be with his better. Put like that, Socrates, the reasonable course turns out to be the opposite of what you just said: It behooves a sensible man to resent dying, a senseless one to enjoy it."

Socrates seemed amused at Cebes' officiousness. He looked
63 at us and said: "Cebes is always tracking down some argument and doesn't like to believe what he's told."

"But Socrates," said Simmias, "for once it looks like he's got something. Why should wise men want to flee true masters—masters better than they—and lightly try to get rid of them? I think he's aiming his argument at you, because you take so lightly leaving both us and what you yourself admit are good masters, the gods."

b "Fair enough," said Socrates. "I take it you're saying that I should defend myself against this charge, as in court."

"Absolutely," said Simmias.

"All right, I'll try to make it more convincing to you than I did to the jury. If, Simmias and Cebes, I did not believe that I would come to other gods wise and good and to dead men better than these men here, then I'd be wrong not to resent death. As it is, you may be certain that I expect to come to
c good men—though I don't assert that very confidently. But that I'll find excellent masters in the gods—you can be sure that if I assert anything at all of the kind, it is that. That's why I don't grieve as much as I might, and I have good hope that something awaits the dead—something, as was said long ago, far better for good men than for bad."

"What, Socrates?" cried Simmias. "Do you intend to leave
d with that thought and not share it with us? I think that's a good to be shared and also your defense if you can make us believe it."

"I'll try," he said. "But first let's find out what Crito has obviously been wanting to tell us for some time."

"Just that the man who will give you the poison keeps telling me you shouldn't talk too much, Socrates. He says that speaking warms a person up, which counteracts the poison, and that sometimes people who talk a lot have to drink two or e
three times."

"Forget about him," said Socrates. "Just have him make enough for two or three times if it's needed."

"I was pretty sure you'd say that," said Crito, "but it was bothering me."

"Forget it," he said. "To you the jury, however, I now wish to present my argument: that it appears reasonable to me for a man who has spent his life truly in philosophy to face death with confidence and to have good hope that when he dies 64
he'll collect the greatest rewards over there. How that may be, Simmias and Cebes, I shall now attempt to explain.

"Others, no doubt, fail to perceive that those who rightly engage in philosophy practice nothing but dying and death. If that is true, it would be rather odd if, when it came, they resented the very thing they had spent all their lives eagerly practicing."

Simmias laughed. "By Zeus, Socrates," he said, "you just made me laugh, though I wasn't much in the mood. But if b
most people—the Thebans especially—had heard that, I think they'd think it well said: Philosophers are really half-dead already, and others hardly fail to perceive that they deserve their condition."

"They'd be right too, Simmias, except for perceiving it. They don't see *how* true philosophers are half-dead and what kind of death they deserve and how they deserve it. But let's c
forget about them and discuss with each other. Do we think that death is something?"

"Of course," Simmias replied.

"Anything but the soul's being rid of the body? Isn't that death: The body becomes separated off by itself rid of the soul, and the soul by itself rid of the body? Is death anything else but that?"

"No, that's what it is."

"Now see if you share my opinion of this—I think it will d
help us to learn more about what we're after. Do you think a philosophical man would seriously concern himself with the so-called pleasures, like those of food and drink?"

"Not at all, Socrates."

"Of sex?"

"No."

"What about the other pleasures that cater to the body—having fine clothes and shoes and other bodily adornments—do you think he'll regard or disregard them, except as
e absolutely necessary?"

"Disregard them," he said, "if he's a true philosopher."

"Don't you think that generally speaking his business won't be with the body and he'll keep away from that as much as he can and be turned to the soul?"

"Yes."

"So it's in things like this that we first catch the
65 philosopher trying to release his soul from its partnership with the body as much as he can, more than other people do."

"Apparently."

"And most people, Simmias, would probably think that a man who has nothing to do with that sort of thing doesn't deserve to live—if he doesn't care about pleasures that come through the body he's already flirting with death."

"That's absolutely true."

"How about in acquiring knowledge? Isn't the body a hindrance if you take it along as a partner in your search?
b Here's what I mean: Do sight and hearing present man with any sort of truth? Or don't even the poets constantly din into our ears that we see and hear nothing precisely? Yet if those two bodily sense yield nothing clear or precise, the others hardly will, because they're poorer than those. Or don't you agree?"

"Completely," he said.

"Then when does the soul seize truth?—when it attempts to examine something with the body it clearly gets deceived."
c "True."

"Isn't it in reasoning and calculation, if anywhere, that something of reality becomes revealed to it?"

"Yes."

"And it reasons and calculates best when none of these things—sight, hearing, pleasure, or pain—annoys it; when it gets as alone by itself as it can, says goodbye to the body, and without clinging to it or being its partner, grasps for what *is*."[6]

"That's true."

[6] **The verb "to be"** is italicized when used in the sense of "exist" or "have true being," a use more common in Greek than in English.

"So here, too, doesn't the philosopher's soul especially disregard the body, flee from it, and seek to get alone by itself?" d

"Apparently."

"How about this, Simmias? Do we say there's a justice itself?"

"We certainly do, by Zeus."

"And a beautiful itself and a good itself?"

"Of course."

"Have you ever seen any of them with your eyes?"

"Never," he said.

"Then have you grasped them with one of the other bodily senses? I'm referring to things like largeness, health, strength—in short, to the essence of all things, what each really is. Have you observed their abolute truth through the e body, or is it like this: Whichever of us is most precisely prepared to think through every 'itself' that we examine will come closest to the knowing of it?"

"Of course."

"And the man who will gain the cleanest knowledge of them will be the one who goes after them each with thought itself, not adding sight to it or dragging any other senses into 66 his calculation, but using pure thought by itself to hunt down each pure thing that *is* by itself, as rid as can be of eyes, ears, and nearly his whole body, as a distraction that prevents the soul from acquiring knowledge and truth. Isn't he the one, Simmias, if any, that will hit being?"

"That's incredibly true, Socrates."

"And from all that," he said, "genuine philosophers are b bound to get an opinion that will make them talk to each other something like this: 'I'll bet weaning ourselves from the body is a kind of a short cut that will bring us on to the track because as long as we're stuck with our bodies and our souls are mixed up with an evil like this, we'll never possess enough of what we desire, which we say is truth. The body and its necessary upkeep presents endless distractions, and if we fall c prey to disease, that, too, hinders the hunt for what *is*. The body fills us with desires and passions, with fears and multifarious phantoms and whims—sheer nonsense that makes the old saying come true: Because of our bodies we can't even hear ourselves think. Then there are wars and quarrels and fights, brought on by nothing else but the body and its desires; all wars arise over money, and we're forced to own money because of the body, shackled to its service like d

slaves. All this distracts us from philosophy, but the ultimate disaster is this: If the body does give us a moment's peace and we turn to the investigation of something, why, there in our searches it pops up again, spreading uproar and confusion all over the place, unnerving us so that we can't see the truth. So really, in our considered opinion, if we're ever to have clean knowledge of anything we must get rid of the body and
e observe the things themselves with the soul itself. Then, it seems, we'll have our desire and what we say we love: knowledge—when we die, not while we live. So the argument indicates. If we're unable to acquire knowledge cleanly with the body, then we'll either never possess it at all or only after
67 we die. Then the soul itself will be by itself apart from the body; not before. And while living, we'll be closest to knowing, it seems, when we partner and traffic with the body the least—except as absolutely necessary—not infecting ourselves with its nature, but cleansing ourselves of it until god[7] himself sets us free. Then, clean and rid of the body's mindlessness, we'll be with our like and know through
b ourselves all purity, which is probably truth. But for the clean to be grasped by the unclean is no doubt unlawful.' Something like that, I think, is what true lovers of learning are bound to conjecture and say to each other. Or don't you think so, Simmias?"

"More than anything, Socrates."

"If that's true, my companion," said Socrates, "then there's great hope for one going to where I'm going now that there, if anywhere, he'll sufficiently acquire what has kept us so busy in our past life, so that this moving away now enjoined upon
c me ought to bring good hope to any man who believes his mind has been made purified and ready."

"Certainly," said Simmias.

"And doesn't purification turn out to be this, as was said in the tale long ago: separating the soul from the body as much as you can and habituating it to collect and gather itself up from every direction out of the body, itself by itself, and to live alone by itself to its fullest extent now and hereafter,
d released as from bonds from the body?"

"Certainly," he said.

[7] **Plato** uses "god" and "the gods" interchangeably. There is nothing monotheistic about the singular; the use is generic, like "man" for "mankind."

"Isn't that called death—release and separation of the soul from the body?"

"Absolutely."

"And don't we say it's always and only those who rightly love wisdom that eagerly try to release it, that this is precisely the philosopher's study: release and separation of the soul from the body?"

"Apparently."

"Then, as I said at the start, wouldn't it be absurd for a man to make himself be and live as close to death as possible, and e
then, when it comes, to resent it?"

"Completely absurd."

"Therefore, Simmias," he said, "true philosophers make a practice of dying, and they of all men have the least to fear from death. Look at it this way: If they are totally estranged from the body and desire to have their soul alone by itself, would it not be stupendous illogic if, when that happened, they should fear and resent it and not gladly go over there, where they have hope of encountering what they've loved all 68
their lives—knowledge—and of getting rid of an associate from which they're estranged? When so many men have willingly followed human sweethearts and wives and sons into Hades, drawn by the hope of seeing and being with their loved ones over there, would a true lover of knowledge with that very same hope—of meeting knowledge nowhere worth mentioning except in Hades—resent dying rather than go b
over there gladly? We mustn't believe it, my friend—not if he's a true philosopher. His intense conviction will be that nowhere else will he meet knowledge cleanly. And if that is so, wouldn't it be stupendous illogic, as I just said, for him to fear death?"

"Stupendous, by Zeus."

"So whenever you see a man resenting his imminent death, isn't that proof enough that he's no lover of wisdom but a lover of the body? I suppose the same man will also love c
money or honor, or both."

"Yes, it's just as you say."

"Doesn't so-called courage also especially apply to such philosophers, Simmias?"

"Absolutely," he said.

"And temperance—even defined as the many define it: not being flustered by the desires, but holding them in moderation and low regard—doesn't that apply only to them,

who disregard the body and live a life of philosophy?"

d "Necessarily."

"If you care to examine the courage and temperance of others, both will strike you as odd."

"Why, Socrates?"

"You know that all others regard death as one of the greatest of evils."

"They surely do," he said.

"And when the brave ones endure death, don't they do so out of fear of some still greater evil?"

"Indeed."

"So all but philosophers are brave out of fear and terror. Yet it's illogical for a man to be brave because of cowardice and terror."

e "It surely is."

"What about the moderate ones? Don't they suffer the same thing—being temperate by a kind of self-indulgence? I know we say that's impossible, but still that's what their silly temperance turns out to be like. They desire certain pleasures and fear being deprived of them, and so they renounce some because they're mastered by others. They call being ruled by
69 pleasures 'self-indulgence,' yet it turns out that they master some pleasures because they themselves are mastered by others. So this resembles what I just said: They're somehow kept temperate through self-indulgence."

"It looks like it."

"O happy Simmias, I'm afraid that this isn't a proper exchange for excellence—trading pleasures for pleasures and pains for pains and fears for fears like coins, the smaller for larger—but that knowledge alone is the valid coinage for
b which we must exchange all of those others: that courage, temperance, justice—all true excellence, in short—truly are what they are only in combination with knowledge, with or without the addition of pleasures and fears and all that; that all these pleasures and pains and fears, if exchanged for each other apart from knowledge, will produce merely a shadow drawing of excellence, truly slavelike and without anything healthy or true; that temperance, courage, and justice are actually a kind of purification from all that, and know-
c ledge itself is a purification. It may be that those who established the initiations[8] among us weren't completely

[8] **I.e.**, into the mystery religions (such as the Eleusinian Mysteries), which promised their initiates eternal bliss.

inept but were hinting all along that whoever gets to Hades uninitiated and imperfected will lie in mud, whereas the purified and initiated will live with gods. For what the initiators say is true: 'Many are initiated, but few are inspired.' These, in my opinion, are none other than proper d
philosophers, and in my life I've left nothing in my power undone but have been in every way eager to join them. Whether my eagerness has been properly placed and we've accomplished anything, we'll know clearly, god willing, when we get over there; quite soon, I imagine. That, Simmias and Cebes, is my defense—why it's reasonable that I don't take it hard or resent leaving you and these masters here— e
because I think I'll find masters and companions no less good over there. And if I've made my defense more convincing to you than I did to the Athenian jury, that is well."

When Socrates had finished, Cebes replied: "I thought most of your speech was excellent, Socrates, but that part 70
about the soul might overwhelm most people with doubt; they may fear that when the soul leaves the body, it perishes and is destroyed on the day a man dies and, released from the body, instantly flies away and scatters like wind or smoke and no longer exists anywhere. If it really exists somewhere, gathered up by itself and rid of those evils you just described, then, Socrates, there would be great and glorious hope that what you say is true. But precisely this point requires no little b
reassurance and proof: that the soul exists when a man dies and that it has some power and intelligence."

"True, Cebes," said Socrates, "so what shall we do?—tell stories and try to find out whether this is likely to be true or not?"

"I'd like to hear your opinion of it," said Cebes.

"If anyone—even a comic poet[9]—were to hear us now," said Socrates, "I don't think he'd accuse me of being a windbag c
and discussing what doesn't concern me. So if this is what you think we ought to examine, then that's what we'll do.

"Let's begin by considering whether the souls of the departed exist in Hades or not. We all recall the old tale: that souls do exist there; they go there from here, then come back here to be born again from the dead. If that's true and the living are born again from the dead, then how can our souls help but exist over there? They could hardly be born again if d

[9] **Perhaps** Aristophanes, who parodied Socrates in the *Clouds*, although Socrates was also parodied by other comic poets.

they didn't exist, and thus we'll adequately prove their existence if we can show that the living come from nowhere else but the dead. If not, we'll need some other argument."

"Certainly," said Cebes.

"Now don't judge only from men," he said. "You'll understand this more easily if we consider all creatures and
e plants and in short everything that has becoming, and see if this is how they become; in no other way than opposites from opposites—for those that have opposites, like the beautiful the ugly, the just the unjust, and so on, for countless others. If a thing has an opposite, let's decide whether it comes into being from anywhere else but its opposite, as when a thing becomes larger—doesn't it necessarily become larger from having first been smaller?"

"Yes."

"And if smaller, doesn't it later become smaller from
71 having been larger before?"

"Indeed."

"And weaker from stronger and faster from slower?"

"Of course."

"And doesn't a thing become worse from having been better, and more just from having been less?"

"What else?"

"Do we have it well enough then? All things come about like that: opposites from opposites."

"Of course."

"Now, doesn't each of these pairs of opposites also have two becomings between them—from the one to the other, and
b from that back again to the first? Between a larger thing and a smaller lies increase and decline, and we call the first process 'increasing,' the second 'declining.'"

"Yes," he said.

"So with separating out and merging together, heating and cooling, and everything else. Even if we don't always have names for them, still in reality this is necessarily so: They take their becoming each from the other and each becomes the other again."

"Certainly," he said.

c "Well, does life have an opposite, as wakefulness sleep?"

"Of course."

"What?"

"Death," said Cebes.

"If they're opposites, don't they come from each other, and

if they're a pair mustn't they have two becomings between them?"

"Absolutely."

"Now I'll tell you one of the teams I just mentioned," said Socrates,"—both it and its becomings, and you tell me the other. I'll say waking and sleep, and from sleep comes waking and from waking sleep, and their becomings are falling d
asleep and waking up. Have you got it well enough?"

"Certainly."

"All right, you do the same with life and death. Do you agree that being dead is the opposite of living?"

"Of course."

"And that they come from each other?"

"Yes."

"What comes from the living?"

"The dead."

"And from the dead?"

"Necessarily the living."

"So all that lives, Cebes, comes from the dead."

"Apparently." e

"Then our souls exist in Hades."

"It seems so."

"And one of their two becomings seems clear enough. Dying is pretty obvious, isn't it?"

"Certainly."

"What shall we do now? Mustn't we supply the opposite becoming, or does nature limp here? Don't we have to provide some opposite to dying?"

"I suppose we do."

"What?"

"Coming back to life."

"Then if there's a coming back to life, wouldn't that be the becoming from the dead to the living?" 72

"Of course."

"So in this way too we agree that the living come from the dead no less than the dead from the living, and we said that this would be evidence enough that the souls of the dead exist somewhere, from where they're born again."

"That seems a necessary conclusion from what we've agreed on, Socrates."

"I don't think our agreements were wrong, Cebes. Look at it this way: If the one becoming didn't always receive its partner, didn't turn, as it were, in a circle but just went in a b

straight line from the one opposite to the other without making the turn and bending back to the first, don't you see that everything would describe that same figure and suffer the same thing and finally cease to become?"

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing difficult," he said. "If there were a falling asleep, but no waking up were provided as a coming out of sleep, you
c know that eventually everything would make Endymion[10] look like an also-ran; he wouldn't even show, because everything else would be in the same condition: asleep. Or if everything merged and nothing separated out, we'd soon have what Anaxagoras said: 'All things together.' In the same way, dear Cebes, if all that took life were to die, and the dead remained in that state and didn't revive, isn't it absolutely necessary that finally everything would be dead and nothing
d would live? If the living came from somewhere else and then died, what device would there be to keep everything from being squandered in death?"

"None whatsoever, Socrates," said Cebes. "I think you're absolutely right."

"I think so too, Cebes—more than anything—and that we weren't deceived in agreeing as we did. There really is a returning to life, the living come from the dead, the souls of
e the dead exist, and—"

"Yes," interrupted Cebes, "and if that argument you've made so often is true, Socrates, that learning is nothing else but recollection,[11] then we must necessarily have learned in some former time what we recollect now. But that would be
73 impossible if our soul didn't exist somewhere before it was born into this human form, so that this, too, makes it likely that the soul is something immortal."

"What are the proofs for that, Cebes?" asked Simmias. "You'll have to remind me—at the moment I don't recollect very well."

"The most beautiful one," Cebes replied, "is that if you

[10] **A beautiful** youth beloved of the Moon. He was granted immortality and eternal youth in the form of an unbroken sleep. The quotation from Anaxagoras, below, refers to the state in which all things were confounded together before Mind put them in their proper order.

[11] **The argument** for learning as recollection is presented in *Meno* 80d-85b, where Socrates illustrates the theory by diagrams.

question people properly, they themselves will explain everything just as it is. That wouldn't be possible if they didn't have knowledge and a right explanation already in them. Also, if you show them diagrams or something, they'll b
give the clearest evidence that this is the case."

"If that doesn't convince you, Simmias," said Socrates, "look at it this way—you doubt, I presume, that what we call learning is recollection?"

"I don't doubt it," said Simmias. "I just lack the very thing we're discussing—recollection. What Cebes just tried to say, though, almost reminded me and made convinced—not that I wouldn't like to hear how you'd attempt to explain it."

"All right," he said. "I suppose we agree that if you c
remember something you must have known it before?"

"Certainly."

"And that knowledge is recollection when it comes about in a certain way? I mean like this: When someone sees, hears, or perceives something with some other sense and not only recognizes it, but also thinks of something else, which is known not by the same but by a different knowledge, can't we justly say he recollects the thing that he thought of?" d

"What do you mean?"

"This: knowledge of a man is different from knowledge of a lyre."

"Of course."

"Yet you know that when lovers see a lyre or a cloak or anything else their sweethearts normally use, this is what happens to them: They recognize the lyre and at the same time apprehend the form of the boy it belongs to. That's recollection. In the same way, when a person sees Simmias, he may recollect Cebes—and so on for countless other things."

"Countless others," said Simmias.

"Then isn't that a kind of recollection, especially when it e
happens with things you've forgotten because you haven't thought about them for a long time?"

"Certainly."

"Well is it possible to look at a picture of a horse or a lyre and recall a man or at a picture of Simmias and recall Cebes?"

"Of course."

"And also at a picture of Simmias and recall Simmias himself?"

"Indeed." 74

"And from all that, doesn't it turn out that recollection may

occur from either the like or the unlike?"

"Yes."

"But when a person recollects something from its like, doesn't he also necessarily notice whether or not the likeness falls in any way short of the thing it reminded him of?"

"Necessarily."

"Now see if this is so: I suppose we say there's an equal—I don't mean a stick to a stick or a stone to a stone or anything like that, but something besides all those, the equal itself. Shall we say there's something like that or not?"

b "Absolutely, by Zeus—incredibly so."

"And do we know the equal itself that *is*?"

"Of course," said Simmias.

"Where do we get our knowledge of it? Isn't it from the things I just said: from seeing equal sticks and stones and so forth and then thinking of something else that *is*, which is different from them? Or doesn't it seem different to you? Don't equal sticks and stones sometimes appear equal and sometimes not, even though they stay the same?"

"Of course."

c "Well, have the equals themselves ever appeared to you to be unequal or equality to be inequality?"

"Never, Socrates."

"Then these equal things aren't the same as the equal itself."

"Not at all, Socrates."

"But still it's from these equal things, different from that equal itself, that you conceived and acquired your knowledge of it."

"That's absolutely true."

"Because it's either like or unlike them."

"Of course."

"It makes no difference which. As long as you see one thing

d and it reminds you of another, like or unlike, that must be recollection."

"Necessarily."

"Now, do we experience something like this with sticks and the other equal things I just mentioned—do they appear to us to be as equal as the equal itself that *is*, or do they somehow fall short of it in equality?"

"They fall very short," he said.

"Then do we agree that when a person sees something and thinks 'the thing I'm looking at is trying to be like something

else that exists, but it's poorer and falls short of being exactly like it,' mustn't he necessarily have had foreknowledge of the thing he says this one is trying to resemble but falls short of?" e

"Necessarily."

"Well, didn't we just have an experience like that with equal things and the equal itself?"

"Absolutely."

"So we must necessarily have known the equal before the time we first saw equal things and realized that they were all striving to be like the equal, but fell short." 75

"True."

"And we surely agree that we realized this in no other way, nor can it be otherwise realized, than by sight or touch or one of the other senses. I regard them as all the same."

"They are the same, Socrates, for the purposes of the argument."

"But from our senses we surely must realize that all the equals that strike our senses strive for that equal itself but fall short of it. Isn't that so?" b

"Yes."

"So before we began to see, hear, and use our other senses, we must somewhere have acquired knowledge of what the equal itself is, so that we could refer the equals that strike our senses to it over there and see that they all aspire to be like that but are inferior."

"That necessarily follows from what we've agreed on, Socrates."

"Didn't we see, hear, and use our other senses as soon as we were born, Simmias?"

"Of course."

"And don't we say that we must have acquired knowledge of equality before that?" c

"Yes."

"Then, it seems, we must have acquired it before we were born."

"It seems so."

"Then if we acquired it before birth and had it with us when we were born, didn't we know both before and immediately upon being born not only the equal, the larger, and the smaller, but everything else of the kind? Our discussion isn't about the equal any more than about the good itself, the beautiful itself, the just itself, the pious itself and, in short, about everything that in our questions and d

answers we stamp with the seal of the 'itself that *is*.' We must necessarily have acquired knowledge of all those before we were born."

"True."

"And if each time we acquired we didn't forget, we'd always be born knowing and always know all our lives. For knowing is nothing other than this: getting and keeping knowledge of something and not losing it. Or don't we call that forgetting, Simmias—dropping knowledge?"

e "We certainly do, Socrates."

"And if, I think, having acquired it before birth and lost it while being born, we later use our senses to reacquire that knowledge we had held once before, then wouldn't the thing we call learning properly be the reacquisition of our own knowledge? And wouldn't we be right in calling that 'recollection'?"

"Certainly."

76 "We've shown it possible to perceive something with sight or hearing or one of the other senses and from it to think of something else that we had forgotten, because the thing approaches it either in similarity or dissimilarity. Thus we've a choice: Either we were all born knowing them and know all our lives, or else those who we say learn later on do nothing else but remember, and learning must be recollection."

"That's certainly true, Socrates."

"Which do you choose, Simmias? Were we born knowing,

b or do we recollect later what we had known before?"

"I can't decide at the moment, Socrates."

"Well, maybe you can decide this: Can a knowing man explain what he knows?"

"Necessarily, Socrates."

"Do you think everyone can explain the things we've just been discussing?"

"I wish they could," said Simmias. "But I'm afraid that tommorrow at this time, there won't be a person alive decently able to do that."

c "Then you don't think that everyone knows them, Simmias?"

"Not at all."

"So they recollect what they had once learned?"

"Necessarily."

"When did our souls get knowledge of them? Certainly not after we became human beings."

"No."

"Before, then."

"Yes."

"So our souls existed apart from the body before they came to human form, Simmias, and they had intelligence."

"Unless, of course, we get that knowledge at the moment of birth—that time is still left, Socrates."

"All right, my friend—then when do we lose it? We just d
agreed that we don't have it when we're born. Do we lose it at the same time that we get it, or can you suggest some other time?"

"No, Socrates. I guess I didn't realize that I was talking nonsense."

"Isn't this our position then, Simmias? If what we're constantly harping on really exists and there is a good and a beautiful and every such essence to which we refer all the e
things that come from our senses, and if we compare these things to those as copies to originals, rediscovering what had once been our own, then just as they exist, so also our souls must have existed before we were born. If they don't exist, then our argument comes to nothing because either both they and our souls must have existed before we were born, or neither. Isn't that true?"

"Incredibly true, Socrates," said Simmias. "Both seem necessary to me, and I think our argument did well to take refuge in the double requirement that both our souls and 77
those essences you mentioned must have existed before we were born. Nothing appears more evident to me than that the good and the beautiful and all you just said exist absolutely. Our demonstration satisfies me."

"What about Cebes?" asked Socrates. "We have to convince him too."

"I think it will do," said Simmias, "even though he is the stubbornest fellow for doubting an argument. I believe he's fairly well convinced that our soul existed before we were born. But that it continues to exist after we die, Socrates— b
even I doubt if that's been demonstrated, and what Cebes just gave as the popular opinion still stands: The soul may disperse at the moment of death, and that would be the end of its being. What's to prevent it from combining and coming into being from somewhere and existing before it enters a human body and then coming to an end and being destroyed when it leaves?"

c "Well put, Simmias," said Cebes. "We seem to have half a demonstration—that the soul existed before we were born—and now, to make our demonstration complete, we must prove that the soul will also exist after we die."

"That's already been proved, Simmias and Cebes," said Socrates, "—if you care to put this conclusion together with the one we just reached—that everything living comes from the dead. If the soul exists before birth, and if it necessarily d comes to life and is born from nowhere else but death and the dead, then, since it must be born again, how can it help but exist after we die? We've already proved what you demand. Still, it seems to me that you and Simmias want to worry the argument further, like children afraid that the wind might scatter the soul and blow it away when it leaves the body, e especially if one happens to die not on a calm but a blustery day."

Cebes burst out laughing: "Try to persuade us like scared children, Socrates. Actually it's probably not us but a child in us that fears such things. So try to reassure him not to be frightened by death like the bogeyman."

"Yes," said Socrates, "we must sing him incantations every day until we've charmed his fear away."

78 "Where will we find a good charm for that kind of thing after you leave us, Socrates?"

"Greece is wide, Cebes," he said, "and she probably has some good men. There are also many barbarian countries. You must hunt through them all for this charm, sparing neither money nor toil, because you'll find nothing more timely to spend them on. You must also search with each other; you may not easily find anyone more able to do this than you."

"We'll do that," said Cebes. "But now let's return to where b we left off, if you'd be happy with that."

"Of course. Why shouldn't I be happy?"

"Fine," he said.

"Well, shouldn't we ask ourselves what kind of a thing this dispersion, and therefore the fear of its happening, pertains to, and what kind of a thing it does not? Then we can examine which kind is the soul and from that either fear or have confidence for our own."

"True," he said.

c "Doesn't dividing up in the way it was composed pertain to compounds and to naturally composite things? Only an

uncompounded thing, if anything, doesn't suffer that."

"That seems right to me," said Cebes.

"Isn't what's always the same in every respect most likely uncompounded, and what's never the same but different at different times most likely compounded?"

"I think so."

"Now let's return to the things we discussed earlier," he said. "Essence itself, whose being we account for in our d
questions and answers—is that always the same in every respect, or always different? Does the equal itself, the beautiful itself, every itself that *is*, which is being, accept any change? Or does each of them that *is*, being one of a kind by itself, stay always in every way ever the same and never in any way accept the slightest change whatsoever?"

"They necessarily always stay the same in every respect, Socrates," said Cebes.

"What about the many beautiful things—men, horses, cloaks, and so on—and equal things, and all the other many e
things that have the same names as those? Are these always the same, or, in direct opposition to those, are they practically never the same in any way with themselves or each other?"

"The latter," said Cebes, "—never the same."

"And can't you touch and see these, and perceive them with 79
the other senses, while those that stay always the same can never be caught with anything but the mind's reasoning because they're unseen and invisible?"

"That's absolutely true, Socrates."

"Then shall we posit two classes of existing things, the visible and the invisible?"

"Yes."

"And the invisible is always the same, the visible never?"

"Indeed."

"Now, don't we consist of body and soul?" b

"Yes."

"Which class shall we say the body more closely resembles and is related to?"

"Obviously the visible."

"And the soul? is it visible?"

"Not to human eyes, at any rate."

"But surely we define this in reference to human nature—or do you think it's to some other?"

"No, that one."

"What about the soul then? Is it seen or unseen?"

"Unseen."

"Then it's invisible."

"Yes."

"So the soul is more like the invisible, the body more like the visible."

c "An absolute necessity, Socrates."

"And haven't we said all along that when the soul uses the body to examine something, either by sight, hearing, or one of the other senses—using the body means examining with the senses—it gets dragged by the body to what's never the same and, clutching to such things, wanders in confusion and staggers as though it were drunk?"

"Of course."

d "But when it examines alone by itself it goes over there to the pure, ever-existing, immortal, and selfsame, and, being related to that, always stays with it whenever it gets alone by itself and can do so, and, clutching to such things, desists from its wandering and remains always the same toward them in every respect. Don't we call such a condition of the soul 'knowledge'?"

"That's absolutely true, Socrates."

"Then from this and from what we said earlier, which class

e do you think the soul most closely resembles and is related to, Cebes?"

"Pursuing it this way, Socrates, I think even the slowest learner would have to admit that the soul completely resembles what always stays the same rather than what does not."

"And the body?"

"The other."

"Now look at it this way: When body and soul are together,

80 nature directs the body to be ruled as a slave, the soul to rule as the master. So going by that, which do you think is more like the divine and which like the mortal? Or don't you think it's the nature of the divine to rule and to lead, of the mortal to be ruled and enslaved?"

"Yes, I do."

"Then which does the soul resemble?"

"Obviously, Socrates, the soul resembles the divine, the body the mortal."

"Now, Cebes, consider whether this is the conclusion of all

b that we've said: The soul is most like the divine, immortal, intelligible, single-formed, indissoluble, and the ever

selfsame in every respect; the body like the human, mortal, multiformed, unintelligent, dissoluble, and the never selfsame in any respect. Is that so, dear Cebes, or can we say something else?"

"No, that's so."

"Then mustn't rapid dissolution pertain to the body, absolute indissolubility—or something close to it—to the soul?"

"What else?" c

"Now you'll notice that when a man dies, his visible part, the body, which also lies in the visible and which we call a corpse, to which pertain dissolution and collapse and being blown away, suffers none of these instantly but lasts a fairly long time, even if he dies in fair condition and in a fair season. And if the body is shriveled, or embalmed as in Egypt, it lasts an almost inconceivably long time, and parts of it—bones d and sinews and so on—are practically immortal even if the body decays. Isn't that so?"

"Yes."

"Yet the soul, the invisible part, which goes to a place as noble, invisible and pure as itself, to 'unseen Hades'[12] and to the good and intelligent god—where, god willing, my soul soon must go—would a thing like that when released from the body be instantly wafted away and destroyed, as most people say? Far from it, dear Cebes and Simmias, but far e rather so: If it departs pure, dragging with it nothing of the body because in life it never willingly partnered with it, but fled the body and gathered itself to itself as its constant practice—which is precisely right philosophy and the true practice of facing death lightly. Or isn't that what we mean by 81 'practicing death'?"

"Exactly."

"Then won't a soul in that condition go to its like, to the invisible, divine, immortal, and intelligent, where it redounds to it to be happy, freed from wandering and folly, from fears, cruel passions, and all other human evils and where, as is said of the initiated, it truly spends all future time with gods? Shall we say that, Cebes, or not?"

"Yes, by Zeus," Cebes replied.

"But if, I believe, it departs defiled and uncleansed of the b body because it always consorted with it, loved it, catered to it,

[12] **The name** "Hades" (the god of the underworld) was popularly understood as meaning "unseen."

and was so fascinated by it and its desires and pleasures that it considered nothing else to be true but bodily things—things one can see and touch and eat and drink and make love to—and habitually hated, dreaded, and fled what is dark and invisible to the eye, but intelligible and tangible to
c philosophy—do you think a soul in that condition will depart alone by itself and pure?"

"Not at all," he said.

"Because it's patched with corporality, which its intercourse with the body has made innate in it by long association and continual practice."

"Of course."

"And we must imagine corporality as weighty, earthy, heavy, and visible, so that such souls are weighed down and dragged back to the visible region by fear of Hades and the
d invisible, and haunt their tombs and monuments where, they say, shadowy apparitions may sometimes be seen as phantoms cast by such souls, which didn't depart cleanly but cling to the visible and so can be seen."

"Most likely, Socrates."

"Likely indeed, Cebes. And they're souls not of good men but scoundrels, forced to wander and pay recompense for their previous evil habits. Thus they must wander until from
e desire for their lingering corporality they're again imprisoned in a body. They assume, as you'd expect, dispositions like the habits they had practiced in life."

"What do you mean, Socrates?"

"Well, reckless gluttons and drunkards and insolent hoodlums, for instance, most likely become mules and
82 similar animals, don't you think?"

"It surely seems likely."

"And those who preferred injustice, tyranny, and rapine become species like wolves and hawks and falcons. Where else shall we say souls like that end up?"

"Nowhere, Socrates—that seems right."

"Then isn't it clear where the others will go, determined by their previous practices?"

"Very clear."

"So wouldn't the happiest of those, who go to the best place, be the ones who pursued the virtues of an ordinary
b citizen—what they call temperance and justice—acquired by habit and practice without philosophy and reason?"

"How will they be the happiest?"

"They'll likely return to some gentle, civilized species like

bees or wasps or ants, or even to the human race again, so that from them come moderate men."

"Most likely."

"But to go to the race of gods is unlawful for any who departs without having been completely purified in c
philosophy. For this reason, dear Simmias and Cebes, proper philosophers abstain from all bodily desires and persistently refuse to give themselves up to them—not from fear of financial ruin or poverty, like the many lovers of money, or from fear of dishonor or disgrace, like men who love honor or power."

"No, that would hardly be fitting, Socrates."

"Not at all, by Zeus. Therefore, Cebes, those who care for d
their souls and don't live for forming their bodies say farewell to the ones who don't know where they're going; they take a different path because they don't think they ought to act contrary to philosophy and its release and purification, but turn to it and follow wherever it leads."

"How, Socrates?"

"Like this: Lovers of learning know that philosophy takes up their soul literally imprisoned and stuck to the body, e
wallowing in ignorance and forced to peer at reality through the body as though through a cage rather than directly, through itself; and philosophy sees the cage's cunning, that it consists of desire, so that the prisoner himself is the main accomplice in his own imprisonment—lovers of learning, 83
therefore, know that philosophy takes up their soul in that condition and gently reassures and tries to release it, points out that observation by eyes (as well as by ears and the rest of the senses) is filled with deceit, persuades the soul to draw away from the senses—except where absolutely necessary to use them—and urges it to collect and gather itself up alone by itself and to trust only itself and those entities themselves b
which it discerns by itself; those which it observes by different means as being different in different things it must never regard as true: such things are perceptible and visible, but what it sees by itself are intelligible and invisible. Believing, therefore, that it ought not to oppose this release, the true philosopher's soul abstains from desires and pleasures and pains as much as it can, reflecting that when one feels intense pleasure, desire, or fear, one does not suffer such an evil from them as one might expect—sickness, or some loss because of c
desire—but the greatest disaster of all, without even taking it into account."

"What is that, Socrates?" asked Cebes.

"That every person's soul, during the time that it feels intense pleasure or pain at something, is forced to consider that thing to be the most vivid and true, though it is not. These are mostly visible things, aren't they?"

"Of course."

d "Isn't it in such states that the soul is most tied down by the body?"

"How?"

"It's as if each pleasure and pain had a nail in it. They nail the soul to the body and make it bodylike, so that it imagines the truth to be whatever the body tells it. From sharing the same opinions and joys as the body, I think the soul is also forced to share the same habits and life and to turn into something that never gets to Hades pure, but always departs contaminated by the body so that it falls right back into
e another body, grows in it like a seed, and remains cut off from all intercourse with the divine, the pure, and the single-formed."

"That's absolutely true, Socrates," said Cebes.

"This is the reason, Cebes, that those justly called lovers of learning are moderate and brave; not for the reason most people think. Or do you think so?"

84 "Not at all, Socrates."

"No. The philosopher's soul will reason like this and think it ought not to release itself by philosophy and then, when released, surrender itself once more to pleasures and pains and tie itself down again, attempting an unfulfillable task, a sort of Penelope's web[13] in reverse, but secure tranquillity from pleasures and pains and, following reason and being always occupied with it, observe the divine, unconjectured,
b and true, and so live this life nourished by that and after death go to its related and like, rid of human evils. After being nurtured like that, Simmias and Cebes, it needn't fear that when leaving the body, it may be scattered and blown away by the wind and fly off and no longer exist anywhere."

c A long silence followed. Socrates appeared to be absorbed in the foregoing discussion, as were most of us. But Cebes and

[13] **Penelope** was courted by a pack of insolent suitors during the absence of her husband Odysseus. She promised to choose one of them as her husband after she had finished weaving a web. Every night she unwove what she had woven during the day.

Simmias were whispering together. Socrates looked at them and said: "I suppose our argument seems deficient to you? It certainly offers plenty of openings for counterholds and misgivings if you run through it thoroughly. So if you're examining something else, fine. But if you're baffled by something in this, don't hesitate to go back over it if you d
think you can improve on it somehow, or to take me along with you if you think I might be able to help you out of your straits."

Simmias replied: "I'll tell you the truth, Socrates. We've been baffled for some time now and have been urging each other to ask because we'd like to hear what you say, but we hesitate to bother you with something you may find unpleasant in your present misfortune."

Socrates laughed quietly. "Tush, Simmias!" he said. "I could hardly persuade others that I don't consider this a e
misfortune if I can't even convince you, and you're afraid that I'm less content now than I was in former days. You must think me a poorer prophet than the swans, who when they see that they must die sing more sweetly than ever before, for 85
delight at going to the god whose servants they are. Men, because of their own fear of death, misrepresent them by saying their song is a sorrowful lament for death. They don't reflect that no bird sings when it suffers—not even the nightingale or swallow or hoopoe, whose songs they call laments. I think that neither they nor the swans sing for sorrow, but as prophet birds of Apollo that foresee the good b
things in Hades they sing for joy, greater on that day than on any other. I consider myself the swans' fellow slave, consecrated to the same god; to me the master has given prophecy no poorer than theirs, and I leave life no more despondent than they. Therefore you must ask and say whatever you wish for as long as the Athenian Eleven permit."

"Fine," said Simmias. "I'll tell you what baffles me, and then Cebes can say what he doesn't accept in the argument. It c
seems to me, Socrates—and to you also, perhaps—that to know anything certain about such things in this life is either impossible or exceedingly difficult, but to give up without completely testing the views on the subject and before you're totally exhausted from examining them on every side is the mark of a weakling. For we must accomplish one of the following: either learn the truth about this from someone else

or find it out for ourselves or, if that's impossible, at least catch the best, most irrefutable human argument we can find
d and ride on it like a raft, sailing through life taking our chances on it, unless we can get safer, less dangerous passage on a securer vessel in the form of some divine explanation. So now I won't be embarrassed to speak, especially since you said we should, and then I won't have to blame myself later for not giving my opinion now. Because, Socrates, after examining our argument both with myself and with Cebes here, I've concluded that it isn't enough."

e Socrates replied: "Perhaps, my companion, your conclusion is right. But tell how it seems insufficient."

"Like this, I think: One could make the same argument about a harmony and a lyre and its strings—that the harmony of a well-tuned lyre is something invisible, bodiless,
86 beautiful, and divine, whereas the lyre itself and its strings are corporeal, composite, earthy bodies akin to the mortal. Now if someone smashed a lyre or broke its strings and then used your argument to assert that the harmony still existed and wasn't destroyed because no device could enable the lyre with its broken strings, which are mortal, to continue to exist
b when the harmony, which is related to and of like nature with the divine, is destroyed, the immortal before the mortal, but claimed instead that the harmony itself must still exist somewhere and that the wood and the strings will rot before the harmony suffers a thing—for surely, Socrates, you yourself, I think, must realize that we take the soul to be exactly that kind of a thing; that just as our bodies are strung and held together by the hot and cold, the wet and dry, and all that sort of thing, so our soul is a blending or harmony of
c these very same things, when they're blended in proper measure—if, therefore, the soul is a kind of harmony, then clearly when our body's tuning is disturbed by disease or some other evil, the soul, though divine, must instantly vanish, like the harmonies of notes and of all crafted instruments, even though the remains of each body last a long
d time, until they're burned or they rot. So see what we'd say to this argument, that the soul is a blending of the body's elements and is the first thing to perish in what we call death."

Socrates smiled and stared at us the way he often did. "Not a bad objection," he said. "Simmias is certainly no bungler at handling an argument. So if one of you is more resourceful

than I, why not answer? But perhaps before answering him we should listen to Cebes, too, so we have time to plan our e
reply. Then if what the two of them say seems to chime, we'll concur; if not, we'll defend the argument. So come, Cebes—tell us what bothers you so much."

"I will," said Cebes. "It seems to me that the argument is still where it was and open to the same objection we made before. I won't take back what I said about our soul existing 87
before it came to this form—I think that part was demonstrated elegantly and, if the word isn't too fulsome, amply. But that it continues to exist somewhere after we die doesn't strike me as having been proved. Not that I agree with Simmias about the soul being weaker and shorter-lived than the body. I think it's far superior in all such respects. 'Then why,' the argument might ask, 'do you still doubt, when you see that a man's weaker part still exists after death? Don't you think his longer-lived part is necessarily preserved during b
that time?'

"Now examine my reply and see if it makes any sense. Like Simmias, it seems that I too need a simile. It's as if an old weaver had died and you used this argument to prove that the man hadn't perished but was safe somewhere, and produced as evidence the cloak he had worn and made, pointing out that it was still safe and undestroyed; and then, if someone disbelieved you, you would ask which lasts longer, a man or a c
cloak in daily use, and upon receiving the answer, 'a man, by far,' believe you had proved that the man was absolutely safe and sound, since the shorter-lived thing hadn't perished. I don't think that's valid, Simmias—I want you to examine this too. Anyone would say that your argument was silly. That weaver had made and worn out many such cloaks; he outlived all of the others and died only before the last, and a d
man is no poorer or weaker than a cloak for that.

"I think this simile illustrates the relation of the soul to the body, and it would strike me as reasonable if someone used it to show that the soul is a long-lived thing, the body a weak, short-lived one. 'Each soul,' he would say, 'wears out many bodies, especially if it lives a long time—for though the body "flows"[14] and continually perishes while a man lives, still the

[14] **Apparently** an allusion to the saying of Heraclitus, "everything flows." Heraclitus (ca. 500 B.C.) maintained that everything changes; the only thing constant is change itself.

e soul constantly reweaves the worn-out parts—and when the soul perishes it must necessarily be wearing its latest web and perish before that one only; and after the soul dies, then the body displays its natural weakness by quickly decaying and disappearing.' So we still don't have a trustworthy argument to give a man confidence that after we die our soul still exists.
88 'Even if one were to grant your argument more,' he might say, 'and allow not only that our souls existed before we were born, but also that there's nothing to keep some of them from existing after we die and from being reborn and dying again many times—because the soul's nature is so strong that it can endure being born again and again—even if one granted all that but was unwilling to concede further that it doesn't suffer in all of these births and finally perish completely in
b one of its deaths—and no man,' he would say, 'could know which death and which release from the body would bring the soul its destruction because none of us can detect that—if this is so, then anyone who faces death with confidence is by rights a confident fool, unless he can prove that the soul is absolutely immortal and indestructible. If he cannot, then every time he is about to die he must fear that in its present break with the body his soul may utterly perish."

c At this point we all felt rather unpleasant, as we later confessed to each other, because where we had been warmly convinced by the argument, we now seemed thrown back into confusion and doubt—not only about the foregoing discussion, but also about what was yet to be said; we feared we were incompetent judges, and that the subject itself might prove uncertain.

ECHECRATES: By the gods, Phaedo, I sympathize with you completely. Even as I listened to you now, I was moved to
d say to myself, "Which one shall I believe? How warmly persuasive was Socrates' argument and now how fallen to doubt!" That comparison of our soul to a harmony has always taken an astonishing hold on me, and it did so now. It seemed like a reminder to me that I myself had held that opinion before. Now I need another argument right from the beginning to persuade me that the soul doesn't die with the body. So tell us, for the love of Zeus: How did Socrates run
e down his rejoinder? Did he show signs of being discouraged, as you say the rest of you were, or did he just calmly come to the argument's rescue? And did his reinforcements suffice?

Tell us everything as accurately as you can.

PHAEDO: Socrates often amazed me, Echecrates, but I had never admired him more. Perhaps having a reply was only to be expected of him, but you had to wonder at the 89
pleasant, respectful, genial way he accepted the young fellows' objections, how perceptively he caught our reaction to them, and how well he cured us and rallied us like defeated, retreating soldiers and got us turned around to follow him and examine the argument with him.

ECHECRATES: How?

PHAEDO: I'll tell you. I was sitting to his right on a little stool next to the cot, and he was much higher than I. He b
reached down, stroked my head, and squeezed the hair together at the back of my neck—he always teased me about my long hair whenever he got the chance—and said: "Tomorrow, perhaps, you'll cut off this beautiful hair."[15]

"Very likely, Socrates," I said.

"Not if you listen to me, Phaedo."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Because we'll both have to do it today if our argument is dead and we're unable to revive it. If I were you and the c
answer escaped me, I'd swear an oath like the Argives not to let my hair grow until I'd fought again and defeated these objections of Simmias and Cebes."

"Not even Heracles, they say, could go against two."

"Then call me in as your Iolaus,"[16] he said, "—as long as there's light."

"I will," I said, "not like Heracles, but like Iolaus calling to Heracles."

"It makes no difference, Phaedo. Just be careful we don't catch a certain disease."

"What?" I asked.

"Argument hatred, similar to hatred of people. No d
affliction is worse, and both strike the same way. People catch hatred of people from trusting a person intensely but without skill and believing the fellow to be absolutely sound and faithful and true, only to discover a little while later that he's

[15]**The Greeks** cut their hair as a sign of mourning. "Oath of the Argives" (c, below): Once when the Argives lost some territory to the Spartans, they cut off their hair and vowed not to let it grow again until they had recovered their territory.

[16]**Heracles'** half-brother and trusted companion.

faithless and wicked. They try again and fail. After numerous clashes, especially with people they had considered their
e closest friends, they finally end up hating everyone and believing that all men are completely corrupt. Haven't you ever seen that happen?"

"Certainly," I said.

"Isn't that shameful, and clear proof that the victim attempts to deal with people without having skill in human
90 affairs? If he had it, he'd believe that things are as they are: that few people are extremely upright or wicked; most are in the middle."

"How do you mean?" I asked.

"Like the extremely large or small. Can you think of anything rarer than finding an extremely large or small man, dog, or anything else? —Or fast or slow, ugly or beautiful, black or white? Haven't you noticed how in everything like that the outer extremes are few and far between, while the ones in the middle are numerous and frequent?"

"Of course," I said.

b "If you were holding a depravity contest, don't you think that even there very few would appear exceptional?"

"Most likely," I said.

"Very likely," he replied. "But you led me astray—that's not how men resemble arguments, but like this: When people unskilled in discourse trust an argument as true, only to find a little while later that it seems to them false—whether it actually is or not—and so with another and another—and
c you know that people who spend their time in disputation especially end up thinking themselves thoroughly wise, unique in perceiving that neither words nor things have anything stable or sound about them but that all reality simply tumbles over and under and never stands still, as though swept along in the Euripus currents."

"That's certainly true," I said.

"Then wouldn't it be a pity, Phaedo, if there were a true,
d stable argument capable of being understood, and then, after meeting those contradictions that seem now false and now true, a man should blame this inconstancy not on himself or his lack of skill, but on argument, glad in his pain to push the blame from himself onto it, and thus spend the rest of his life hating and reviling argument, deprived of the knowledge and truth about reality?"

"Yes, by Zeus, that would be a pity," I said.

"Then," he said, "let's be careful not to concede to our souls that argument may be unsound; let's say instead that e
we're not yet sound and must avidly, courageously strive to become so, you and these others for the sake of the rest of your lives, I for the sake of death; because I'm afraid that at present, 91
I regard that very subject not philosophically but tendentiously, like the completely uneducated. They too, when they argue about something, don't care about the truth of the matter; they just want to make their listeners believe that things are as they say. In my present circumstances I think I'll differ from them only in this: I'll be eager to make my views seem true not to my listeners—except incidentally—but to myself. See how selfishly I calculate, my b
friend: If what I say should really be true, it would be well to believe it. If, however, nothing awaits the dead, I'll at least make this time before my death less unpleasant for you by not lamenting; nor will my folly persist—that would be evil—but soon disappear. In that frame of mind, Simmias and Cebes, I advance on the argument. But you, if you take my advice, will think little of Socrates but much of the truth, and if my ideas c
seem true you'll agree; if not, resist every argument. And be careful that in my eagerness I don't deceive you as well as myself and then fly off like a bee, leaving my sting behind.

"Well, let's begin. First I'll review your objections, and you remind me of anything I seem to forget. Simmias, I believe, doubts and fears that the soul, though more beautiful and divine than the body, may be a kind of harmony and perish d
before it. Cebes, I think, agrees with me that the soul is longer-lived, but doubts if anyone can be certain that it doesn't wear out many bodies and, in leaving the last, perish itself, so that this—the soul's destruction—would be death, since the body never stops perishing. Is that what we have to examine, Simmias and Cebes?"

They both agreed that it was. e

"First of all," he said "do you reject all the preceding arguments or only some of them?"

"Only some," they said.

"What do you think of the one about learning being recollection, so that our soul must have existed somewhere else before it was imprisoned in the body?" 92

"I was completely convinced of that at the time," said Cebes, "and I still cling to it like no other argument."

"So do I," said Simmias. "I'll be surprised if I ever change my mind about that."

"You'll have to, my Theban friend," said Socrates, "if you want to stick to your notion that the soul is a harmony, a composite thing composed of the tuned elements of the body. I doubt if you'd even accept that from yourself: that a
b harmony could be composed before the elements it's composed of exist. Would you?"

"Not at all, Socrates."

"Don't you see that this is what your argument amounts to when you say the soul exists before it comes to human body and form and is composed of elements that don't yet exist? A harmony doesn't resemble what you compared it to because the unharmonized lyre, strings, and notes come into being
c first, and the harmony is the last thing to be composed and the last to perish. So how does this argument chime with the other?"

"It doesn't," said Simmias.

"But if any argument ought to harmonize, it should be one about harmony."

"It surely should," he said.

"But this one doesn't, so which do you choose: learning as recollection or the soul as a harmony?"

"The first, by far, Socrates. The other just came to me the
d way it comes to most people—not by demonstration, but by a certain specious probability. I realize that arguments whose demonstrations depend on probability, in geometry or anything else, are imposters that may well deceive us if we don't watch out. But our argument about learning as recollection was demonstrated by means of an assumption worthy of acceptance. We stated, I believe, that our soul existed before it came to a body just as surely as the essence we
e call 'that which *is*' belongs to the soul. I'm convinced that I've accepted that assumption fully and properly. Therefore, it seems, I may permit neither myself nor another to say that the soul is a harmony."

"Now, Simmias, look at it this way: Do you think it befits a
93 harmony or any other composite to be in a different state than the parts that compose it?"

"Not at all."

"Or to do or to suffer anything other than they?"

"No."

"Then it befits a harmony not to lead but to follow the parts it consists of."

He agreed.

"And it would never sound or vibrate contrary to its own parts, or oppose them in any other way."

"Never."

"Now, isn't it the nature of harmony to be just such a harmony as it was tuned to be?"

"I don't understand," he said.

"Well, suppose it could be tuned more and more fully or less and less fully, if that were possible: Wouldn't it then be b more or less of a harmony?"

"Of course."

"Is that true of soul? Can one soul be even the slightest bit more or less, or more or less fully, that which it is—soul—than another?"

"No."

"Now consider this, by Zeus: Do we say that one soul has intelligence and excellence and is good, while another has foolishness and depravity and is evil? And is it true to say c that?"

"It certainly is."

"Then what would a man who posits the soul as a harmony say that excellence and evil in the soul are? Another harmony and a disharmony? And that a good soul, itself a harmony, is in tune and has another harmony in it, while a bad soul is untuned and doesn't have another harmony in it?"

"I don't know," said Simmias. "One who made that assumption would clearly say something like that."

"But we just agreed that no soul is ever more or less of a soul d than another. That *is* our agreement, isn't it—that no harmony is ever more or less, or more or less fully, a harmony than another?"

"Of course."

"If it's neither more nor less of a harmony, it also harmonizes neither more nor less. Isn't that so?"

"Yes."

"If it harmonizes neither more nor less, does it participate more or less in harmony, or equally?"

"Equally."

"Then since one soul is neither more nor less that which it is—soul—than another, doesn't it harmonize neither more e nor less?"

"Indeed."

"If that's the case, can one soul participate in more harmony or disharmony than another?"

"No."

"Then if excellence is harmony and evil disharmony, can one soul participate in more excellence or evil than another?"

"Not a bit."

94 "Actually, Simmias, proper reasoning demands that no soul, if it's a harmony, can participate in any evil. Harmony, being absolutely that—harmony—will never participate in disharmony."

"No."

"Nor soul, being absolutely soul, in evil."

"How could it after what we've said?"

"By this argument, therefore, all souls of all creatures are equally good, if all souls by nature are equally souls."

"I think so, Socrates."

"Do you also think it's a good argument? Would this have b happened to it if our assumption were correct—that soul is a harmony?"

"Not at all."

"Now of all the parts of man, can you name one that rules except soul, particularly if it's intelligent?"

"No."

"By opposing or by yielding to bodily states? By pulling to the opposite—not drinking—when heat and thirst arise, for instance, or to not eating when hunger occurs—in these and countless other things don't we see the soul opposing the c states of the body?"

"Of course."

"Didn't we agree earlier that if the soul were a harmony, it would never sound contrary to its parts as they get tightened, loosened, plucked, or anything else, but always follow them and never lead?"

"Of course we did," he said.

"Well, haven't we now shown the soul's structure to be the exact opposite of that? It dominates all the parts one might d say it consists of, opposes nearly all of them all through life, and masters them in every way, some harshly with painful discipline like gymnastics and medicine, others more gently, admonishing some and threatening others, speaking to desires, passions, and fears like one thing to another. Even Homer presents that, when in the *Odyssey* he says of e Odysseus: 'He struck his chest and rebuked his heart:/bear up, old heart, you've endured fouler than this.'[17] Do you

[17] **The quotation** is from *Odyssey* 20.17-18.

think he'd have composed that if he had thought of the soul as a harmony, something led by the states of the body, rather than as something that leads and masters them, far too divine to compare to a hamony?"

"No, I don't think so, Socrates."

"Therefore, my friend, it's wrong for us to call the soul a kind of harmony. We'd be disagreeing both with Homer, it 95
seems—a divine poet—and with ourselves."

"That's true," he said.

"Well," said Socrates, "it looks like we've pretty well propitiated Theban Harmony.[18] Now, Cebes, how about Cadmus? What argument shall we propitiate him with?"

"I think you'll find one," said Cebes. "It's amazing how your argument against harmony surpassed my wildest expectations. After hearing Simmias tell what baffled him, I'd have been astounded if anyone could have handled his b
objection. Then I was astounded when it fell to your argument's very first attack. So I won't be surprised if the same thing happens to Cadmus's objection."

"Don't talk like that," said Socrates, "you'll jinx our argument and scare it away. Well, we'll leave that to the god, while we Homerically clash with your objection and see if it makes sense. The gist of it is this: You demand that our soul be proved indestructible and immortal. Otherwise any c
philosopher about to die confident in the belief that he'll fare better over there than if he had lived some other life will be proved a silly but confident fool. Our proof that the soul is a strong, godlike thing that existed before we became men does not indicate its immortality, you say, but only that it's a long-lived thing that existed, knew, and did all sorts of things for an inconceivable length of time before we were born. But it's still not immortal, and by entering a human body it initiated d
its own destruction, like a disease, because during this life it wears away and finally perishes in what we call death. And, you say, it makes no difference whether it enters a body once or many times. We still must fear every death, because fear becomes anyone but a fool unless he knows and can explain that the soul is immortal. Something like that, I believe, is e
what you maintain, Cebes. I've purposely repeated it several times so nothing escapes us and so you may add or subtract whatever you'd like."

[18] **Harmony** was the wife of Cadmus, a legendary king of Thebes (the home town of Cebes and Simmias).

"I've got nothing to add or subtract at the moment," said Cebes. "That's my position."

Socrates sat quietly meditating for some time. "This is no trivial thing you're investigating, Cebes. We'll have to work
96 out the cause of all coming to be and passing away. If you like, I can describe my own experiences in this field, and if I say anything that seems useful to you, you may use it to help settle your doubts."

"Yes, I'd like to hear them," said Cebes.

"All right," he said. "As a young man, Cebes, I had an awesome desire for the wisdom called the investigation of nature. It struck me as a proud thing to know the causes of all things, why each comes to be, passes away, and is. I often
b agonized over questions like these: 'Are creatures nourished as some people say—when the hot and the cold form a kind of fermentation?[19] What do we think with—our blood? air? fire? Or is it the brain, which produces the sensations of sight, hearing, and smell, from which arise opinion and memory, which in turn, having reached quiescence, give rise to knowledge?' After further exploring the causes of their passing away, as well as what was going on in heaven and
c earth, I at last concluded that I was eminently unqualified for this kind of study. I'll give you convincing proof of that: These studies so blinded me that I even unlearned things that I—and others too—had once thought I knew clearly, among them the reason why people grow. Before then, I had thought it obvious to everyone that it happened from eating and
d drinking: that, from food, flesh was added to flesh, bone to bone, and so on for the rest—each substance increased by the addition of its own proper substance, so that a small mass became large and thus a boy grew to a man. That's what I thought—doesn't it seem reasonable to you?"

"Yes," said Cebes.

"Now consider this: When one man or one horse stood next to another and appeared larger, it seemed obvious enough to
e me that he was larger 'by a head'[20] and still more obvious that ten is more than eight by the addition of two, just as a two-

[19] **The various** scientific theories mentioned here were current in Socrates' youth.

[20] **Part of** the confusion in expressions like this arises from the ambiguity of "by," which may denote either *degree of difference* ("taller *by* so much), *manner* or *means* ("we teach *by* precept and

foot ruler is larger than a one-foot ruler because it exceeds it by half its length."

"How does it seem to you now?" asked Cebes.

"Now I'm so far from thinking that I know the cause of any of this that when one is added to one, I can't even tell whether the one that's added becomes two, or the one that's added to, or whether both together become two by the addition of the 97
one to the other. I'm surprised that they were each one when apart and not then two, and became so only after coming together, so that this was the cause of their becoming two—the union formed by placing them next to each other. Nor can I believe that when one is divided in two, this—the division—causes it to become two; because this cause is the opposite of the other. Then two came into being because they were each b
brought together and put side by side; now it happens because they're pulled apart and separated from each other. And I no longer believe that I know why one comes to be or for that matter why anything else comes to be, passes away, or is—not by that method. So I've thrown together a way of my own and never take that way any more.

"Once I heard a man reading from a book written, he said, by Anaxagoras, who said mind disposes and causes all things. c
That delighted me; it struck me somehow as right that mind should cause everything. If that were true, I thought, then the ordering mind must order all things and put each in its best possible condition. Therefore if one wished to discover the cause of anything's coming to be, passing away, or being, all one had to do was find out why it was best for it to be or to suffer or to do whatever it does. By this account the only thing d
a man ought to examine, about himself or anything else, was the best, because then he would also know the worst, since both are objects of the same knowledge.

"So I reasoned, glad because in Anaxagoras I thought that I had found a teacher after my own mind of the causes of all existing things, and that he would first tell me whether the earth is round or flat and then explain the reason and e
necessity for this by revealing the best and showing why it was best for the earth to be as it is. Or if he said that it was in the

example," or *agency* or *cause* ("killed *by* the plague"). Confusion results when, as here, one of the former two senses is understood as denoting a cause ("taller *because of* a head").

98 center, why it was best for it to be there. If he'd reveal that, I was prepared never to long for any other form of cause. And I was prepared to hear the same for the sun, the moon, and the other stars, about their relative speeds, revolutions, and other conditions—how it's best that they do and suffer precisely what each of them does. I never dreamed, after he said they'd been ordered by mind, that he'd attribute to them any other
b cause than that it was best for them to be as they are. I assumed that when he assigned the cause to each one and to all in common, he'd also explain their common and individual good. I wouldn't have sold my high hopes for anything, and I earnestly picked up his books and read them as fast as I could in order to learn as quickly as possible the best and the worst.

"I was hurled from these towering hopes, my friend, when I continued reading and saw a man who made no use of mind
c and ascribed no other cause to the ordering of things, but made causes out of air, ether, water, and all sorts of strange things. It reminded me of someone who says that Socrates does all that he does by mind and then attempts to explain the reasons for each of my actions by saying that I'm sitting here now, for instance, because my body consists of bones and sinews; the bones are solid and separated by joints, while the
d sinews can loosen and tighten, and they clothe the bones, as do the flesh and the skin that hold the bones together. Now, since the bones swing in their sockets, the sinews, by contracting and relaxing, presumably enable me to bend my limbs, and that's why I'm sitting here now all folded up like this. And he'd give similar causes for my speaking with you—voice and air and hearing and a thousand more—and neglect
e to mention the true cause: that because the Athenians resolved it best to condemn me, so I am resolved that it's best for me to sit here and that it's right to stay and endure whatever punishment they decree. Otherwise, by the dog, I
99 think these bones and sinews would have been in Megara or Boeotia long ago, carried there by the resolve that that was the best, if I hadn't thought it better and more just to submit to any punishment the city decrees than to run away like a slave.

"To call such things causes is very strange. If one were to say that without bones and sinews and all the rest I wouldn't be able to carry out my resolves, that would be true. But to say that I do what I do because of those things rather than by deliberately choosing the best—especially when I'm
b supposed to be acting by mind—betrays a lazy, slovenly

manner of speaking. Imagine being unable to distinguish the true cause from something necessary for the cause to exist—which is precisely what most people, groping around in the dark and applying an alien term, seem to call a cause. Therefore one[21] wraps the earth in a vortex so that the sky holds it in place; another shoves air under it for a support, as though it were flat, like a breadboard. No one looks for the c
force that now keeps everything in the best possible condition or believes that it has such a superhuman strength. They think they'll discover an Atlas stronger than this one, more immortal and more able to hold all things together. They don't believe that the literally good and the binding holds or binds anything. I'd gladly become a pupil of anyone who could teach me what such a cause is like. But since I was deprived of that, unable to learn it either by myself or from anyone else, would you like me to describe the second-best ship I rigged out to search for the cause, Cebes?" d

"I certainly would," he said.

"Well, after I'd given up studying the physical world, I thought I'd better be careful and not suffer what observers of solar eclipses do. They ruin their eyes unless they observe the sun's image in water or something. Something like that e
occurred to me, and I was afraid I might blind my soul completely by looking at things with my eyes and other senses and trying to grasp them like that. So I decided to take refuge in words and examine the truth of things in them. Perhaps my image doesn't quite fit, because I wouldn't care to admit 100
that you're examining more in images when you observe things in words than when you observe them in actions. At any rate I went at it like this: In each case I take as an assumption the proposition I judge the most valid, and posit as true whatever seems to agree with that—whether it concerns causes or anything else—and as false what does not. But I'll have to make this clearer; I don't think you understand it now."

"Not very well, by Zeus," said Cebes.

"Well, I don't mean anything new—just what I always talk b
about and have been talking about all through this discussion. I'm going to try to show you the form of cause I've worked out. I'll go back and start from what I'm always harping on and assume that there is a beautiful itself by itself,

[21] **"One . . . another:"** Empedocles and Anaximenes.

and a good itself, a large itself, and everything else itself. If you'll grant me those and agree they exist, I hope to demonstrate causality from them and also discover that soul is immortal."

c "You've got my agreement," said Cebes, "—go ahead."

"Now see if you also share my opinion of what follows from them. It seems to me that if anything is beautiful besides the beautiful itself, it's beautiful only because it participates in that beautiful itself. And the same for everything else. Do you accept that kind of a cause?"

"Yes," he said.

"I still can't understand those other profound causes. When someone says that a thing is beautiful because of its d bright colors or its shape or something, I just get confused. So I let those causes go and stick to my own simple, unskilled, and perhaps silly explanation: that the only thing that makes a thing beautiful is the presence, partnership, or whatever it ought to be called, of the beautiful itself. I won't vouch for the way that it happens, but only for this: that all beautiful things become beautiful by the beautiful. That strikes me as the e safest reply to give to myself or anyone else, and as long as I hold on to it, I don't think I'll fall because this answer gives safe footing to me or to anyone else: Beautiful things are beautiful by the beautiful. Do you agree?"

"Yes, I do."

"And large things become large and larger ones larger by largeness; smaller things become smaller by smallness?"

"Yes."

"So you too, I think, would reject the statement that one man is larger than another 'by a head,' and the other smaller 101 by that same thing. You'd insist that one thing is larger than another only by and because of largeness and that the smaller is smaller only by and because of smallness. I think you'd be afraid that if some contradictory argument accosted you and you told it that one man was larger and another smaller 'by a head,' the argument would make you admit first of all that the larger is larger and the smaller smaller by the same thing; secondly, that the larger is larger by 'a head,' which is small—and it would be monstrous for someone to be large b because of something small. Wouldn't you be afraid of that?"

Cebes laughed. "I surely would," he said.

"Wouldn't you also be afraid to say that ten is more than eight by two and exceeds it because of that and not because of

quantity? Or that a two-foot ruler is larger than a one-foot ruler by its half rather than by largeness? It's all the same fear."

"Certainly," he said.

"And when one is added to one, or divided in two, won't you carefully avoid saying that the addition or the division c
caused the two to come about? Won't you loudly exclaim: 'I don't know how anything can come to be except by participating in the peculiar essence of each thing it partakes of. Therefore the only cause I can give for the two coming to be in these cases is participation in duality, in which anything must participate to be two, just as anything must participate in unity to be one.' You'll ignore addings and dividings and all such subtle causes and leave it to wiser men than you to give answers like that, while you, 'scared of your own shadow,' as they say, and of your inexperience, will cling d
to the security of our assumption and answer as we have. And if someone sticks to the assumption itself, you'll ignore him and refuse to answer until you've examined its consequences and seen whether they harmonize or not. And when you must explain the assumption itself, you'll do it the same way: You'll take another, higher assumption—whichever one seems best—and keep on until you reach one that's adequate. You won't jumble them all together like the contradictors, e
who discuss both the source[22] and its consequences at the same time—not if you want to discover something of reality. Perhaps they don't have any care or explanation for this, but they're so clever they can mix everything up and still please themselves. But you, I think, will proceed as I've said, if you're a philosopher." 102

"That's perfectly true," said Simmias and Cebes together.

ECHECRATES: They were right too, by Zeus. It's amazing, Phaedo, how clear he made that, for anyone with the slightest intelligence.

PHAEDO: Of course, Echecrates. That's how it seemed to all of us at the time.

ECHECRATES: And to all of us hearing it now. But what did they say after that?

PHAEDO: As I recall, after they had agreed with him that each of the forms exists and that all other things get their b

[22] **Or "principle."** This probably refers to the Good as the governing source of all being. Cf. *Republic* 508 ff.

names from these forms by participating in them, Socrates asked: "If that's the case, then when you say Simmias is larger than Socrates but smaller than Phaedo, aren't you saying that Simmias has both largeness and smallness in him?"

"Yes."

"Yet you agree that Simmias is not in fact taller than
c Socrates in the way the words imply. It's not Simmias's nature to be tall because he is Simmias, but because he happens to have largeness. Nor is he taller than Socrates because Socrates is Socrates, but because Socrates has smallness relative to Simmias's largeness."

"True."

"Nor is he shorter than Phaedo because Phaedo is Phaedo, but because Phaedo has largeness relative to Simmias's smallness."

"That's true too."

"Thus Simmias is called both great and small, being in the middle of both. To one person's greatness he submits his
d smallness to be surpassed; to another man's smallness he presents his own surpassing greatness." Socrates smiled. "It sounds like I'm developing a prose style," he said, "but still it's probably much as I say."

Simmias agreed.

"I'm saying this because I want you to share my opinion. It seems to me that largeness itself never consents to be both large and small at the same time, and that even the largeness in us never accepts the small or consents to be surpassed. Either it withdraws and flees when its opposite attacks, or it
e has already perished when smallness arrives—one or the other. It's unwilling to stand up to smallness, accept it, and become other than it was. I can withstand and accept smallness and still be who I am—I'm the same person even if small. But largeness itself doesn't have the nerve to be small while still being large. In the same way, the small in us never consents to become or to be large. No opposite is willing to be
103 or become its opposite while it still is what it was; it either leaves or perishes when that happens to it."

"That seems absolutely true," said Cebes.

Then someone—I forget who—said: "By the gods, didn't we agree earlier to the exact opposite of this—that the larger comes from the smaller and the smaller from the larger, and that all opposites take their becoming from their opposites? It looks to me like we're now saying that this could never happen."

Socrates turned to him and replied: "A brave reminder, but b
you don't notice the difference between what we're saying
now and what we said then: Then we said that opposite
things come from opposite things; now we're saying that the
opposite itself will never become opposite to itself—neither
the one in us nor the one in nature. Then, my friend, we were
discussing things that have these opposites in them and
naming them after the opposites; now we're discussing the
opposites themselves, which give their names to the things
that possess them. Those opposites themselves, we say, will c
never consent to accept their becoming from each other."
Socrates turned to Cebes: "What he just said didn't confuse
you, did it?"

"Not that," said Cebes. "I won't deny, though, that lots of
things confuse me."

"So we're agreed on this," said Socrates, "the opposite itself
will never be opposite to itself."

"Absolutely," said Cebes.

"Now examine this and see if we agree: Do you say there's a
hot and a cold?"

"Yes."

"Are they the same as snow and fire?"

"No, by Zeus." d

"The hot is different from fire, and the cold is different
from snow?"

"Yes."

"I think you also agree, as in the previous examples, that
snow will never, while remaining what it was, accept the hot
and become hot snow. When the hot attacks, snow either
withdraws from it or perishes."

"Of course," said Cebes.

"And when cold attacks fire, the fire will either withdraw
or perish. It will never, while remaining what it was, dare to
accept cold and become cold fire."

"True." e

"With some things, therefore, the situation is this: A form's
own name properly designates not only the form itself for all
time, but also other things which, though they are not that
form, always have its figure[23] whenever they exist. Perhaps

[23] **"Figure,"** "shape," and "form" are all synonyms for designating the eternal archetypes. The word translated as "shape" (104b ff.) is *idea*, traditionally transliterated as "idea." This, however, is misleading, since in English "idea" normally refers to something that exists only in the mind. The root of both *eidos* ("form") and *idea* is *id*, "see." Both words denote something seen, the looks or appearance of a thing.

this will make my meaning clearer: The odd, no doubt, must always get the name I just gave it. Isn't that so?"

"Oí course."

"Only it?—this is my question—or are there some other
104 existing things which, though not identical with the odd, still must always be given that name as well as their own because by their very nature they never abandon the odd? I'm thinking of what happens to three and many other things. But let's look at three. Don't you think that three must always be called odd as well as three, even though the odd is not identical with three? Still, three, five, and half of all the
b numbers have such a nature that each is always odd, though none is identical with the odd; whereas two, four, and the whole other series are always even, although none of them is identical with the even. Do you agree?"

"Certainly."

"Now observe what I'm trying to make clear: Not only do those opposites obviously not accept one another, but all things that have those opposites in them, though not themselves opposed to each other, act as if they refuse to accept the shape that opposes the opposite in them—when it
c attacks they either withdraw or perish. Or shouldn't we say that three will suffer anything and sooner die than become even while still being three?"

"Of course," said Cebes.

"But two surely isn't opposite to three."

"No."

"So it isn't just opposite forms that refuse to accept one another's attack; there are other things too that refuse to accept an opposite's attack."

"True."

"Shall we define, if we can, what kind of things these are?"

"Of course."

d "Well, Cebes, wouldn't they be things that force anything they occupy to possess not only their own shape, but also the shape of something with an opposite?"

"How do you mean?"

"The way we just said. You know that the shape of three compels anything it occupies to be odd as well as three."

"Of course."

"A thing like that, then, would never be attacked by the shape opposite to the figure that makes it odd."

"Of course not."

"And the figure that makes it odd is the odd."
"Yes."
"Whose opposite is the shape of the even."
"Yes."
"Therefore the shape of the even will never invade three." e
"No."
"Then three has nothing to do with the even."
"Nothing at all."
"So three is uneven."
"Yes."
"I said we had to define which things, though they themselves are not opposite to anything, nevertheless refuse to accept an opposite—the way three, though not itself opposite to the even, still refuses to accept the even because it always brings with it the opposite of even, or the way two refuses to accept the odd, fire refuses to accept cold, and so on. So see if you'd agree to this definition: Not only does an 105
opposite refuse to accept its opposite, but anything else that brings with it something opposite to whatever attacks it also refuses to accept the opposite of what it brings with it. Let me remind you again—it doesn't hurt to hear a thing several times: Five will never accept the shape of the even, nor ten, its double, the shape of the odd. This double, to be sure, has its own opposite, but still it will never accept the shape of the odd. Nor will one and a half, or fractions like one-half or one- b
third accept the form of the whole. Do you follow and agree, Cebes?"
"Absolutely," he said.
"Then let's take it again from the beginning. And don't answer my questions in the way that I put them, but imitate me—from what we've said, I see another safe way of answering besides that safe way I mentioned at first. If you asked me what must be present in any body to make it warm, I wouldn't give you our safe but stupid answer, 'heat,' but a c
more elegant one based on what we've just said: 'fire.' And if you ask what makes a body sick, I won't say disease, but fever. Or if you ask what must be in a number to make it odd, I won't say oddness, but unity, and so forth. Do you understand well enough what I want?"
"Yes, very well," he said.
"All right—what must be present in any body to make it live?"
"Soul," he said.

d "Is that always true?"

"How could it be otherwise?"

"So soul always comes bringing life to whatever it occupies."

"It surely does."

"Does life have an opposite?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"Death."

"Doesn't it follow from what we've agreed on that soul will never accept the opposite of what it brings with it?"

"Absolutely," said Cebes.

"What did we just call a thing that never accepts the shape of the even?"

"Uneven."

"And things that never accept justice and music?"

e "Unjust and unmusical."

"What do we call something that doesn't accept death?"

"Deathless."

"Does soul accept death?"

"No."

"Then soul is deathless."

"Indeed."

"Well, Cebes? Have we proved that soul is immortal?"

"Very adequately, Socrates."

"How about this, Cebes: If the uneven were necessarily
106 imperishable, wouldn't three be imperishable too?"

"Of course."

"And if the heatless were necessarily imperishable, then whenever heat was applied to snow, wouldn't the snow withdraw safe and unmelted? It surely wouldn't perish or withstand the heat and accept it."

"True."

"In the same way, I think, if the coldless were imperishable, then whenever something cold attacked fire, the fire wouldn't perish or go out, but leave and go away safe."

"Necessarily."

b "Then mustn't we say the same of the deathless? If the deathless is imperishable, a soul cannot perish when death attacks it. From what we've said, it will never accept death or be dead, any more than three or the odd will ever be even, or fire or its heat ever be cold. 'But,' someone might object, 'even though we agree that the odd never becomes even when the

even attacks, what's to prevent the odd from perishing and the even taking its place?' We couldn't argue with him because we haven't agreed that the odd is imperishable. If we had, we could easily argue with him by saying that the odd and three go away when the even attacks. And so for fire and heat and the rest. isn't that true?" c

"Certainly."

"The same for the deathless: If we agree that the deathless is imperishable, then soul will be imperishable as well as immortal. If not, we'll need another argument." d

"But that isn't necessary," said Cebes. "Hardly anything could escape destruction if the immortal, which is eternal, accepted destruction."

"And," said Socrates, "I think everyone would agree that god and the very form of life, and whatever else may be deathless, will never be destroyed."

"Not only every man, I think, but also and especially, by Zeus, the gods."

"Then if the deathless is indestructible, mustn't the soul, if it's really deathless, also be indestructible?" e

"An absolute necessity."

"So when death attacks a man, his mortal part dies, it seems, but his deathless, immortal part withdraws from death and departs, safe and undestroyed."

"Apparently."

"Therefore, Cebes, soul is above all immortal and indestructible, and our souls will exist in Hades." 107

"I've got nothing to say against that, Socrates. I can't doubt our conclusions at all. But if Simmias here or anyone else has an objection, he'd better raise it now because I don't think he can postpone the discussion until some other time."

"Well," said Simmias, "after what we've said I don't have any doubts either. But because of the subject's importance b and because of my contempt for human weakness, I'm forced to keep doubting our conclusions."

"Well put, Simmias," said Socrates. "You should also examine our original assumptions more carefully, even if they seem trustworthy to you. If you sort them out well enough, I think you'll follow our argument as well as a human being can follow. And once you've made sure of them, you needn't search further."

"True," he said.

"We're right in supposing this much, gentlemen: If the c

soul is immortal, we must care for it not only for the sake of this time we call life, but for the sake of all time; because if we neglect it, the hazard of death now appears truly appalling. If death were a release from everything, it would be a godsend to the wicked because it would release them from their souls and their evil as well as from their bodies. But now that the soul
d has been proven immortal, it has no refuge or salvation from evil except to become as good and intelligent as it possibly can. The soul brings to Hades nothing but its education and training, which, we are told, greatly help or harm the departed from the very beginning of his journey over there. Each person's own deity, it is said, to whom he was allotted in life, attempts after death to bring him to a certain place where all are gathered and judged, and from where they travel to
e Hades with the guide assigned to lead them from here to there. There they get what they must and stay for as long as they must, until after long cycles of time another guide brings them back here.

"'A single path leads to Hades,' says Aeschylus's
108 Telephus.[24] But I think it's neither single nor one. Otherwise we wouldn't need guides because no one could miss the way on a single path. It must have forks and crossroads, to judge from our rites and sacrifices here.[25] An orderly, intelligent soul follows its guide and doesn't misunderstand the conditions. But a soul that desirously clings to the body, as we
b said earlier, that flutters around it and the visible region for a long time, struggling and suffering, departs reluctantly, forcibly led by the deity assigned to it. And arrived at the place where the others already are, the impure soul that committed impure deeds, joined to foul murder and other atrocities—sister acts of sister souls—why, everyone shuns such a soul, turns his back on it, and refuses to be its guide or journey
c mate; thus it wanders, utterly bewildered, until a certain time has passed, when it gets swept by necessity to its fitting abode. But the soul that lived a pure and moderate life finds guides and journey mates in the gods, and inhabits the place that befits it. For the earth, as I once was persuaded, is such as geographers have never imagined, and filled with astonishing places."

[24] **In a** lost tragedy.

[25] **Sacrifices** to Hecate (a goddess of the dead) were performed on crossroads, which seem to be haunted in all places and times.

"What do you mean, Socrates?" asked Simmias. "I've heard many things about the earth, but never your belief. I'd like to hear it." d

"I don't think it would take the skill of a Glaucus[26] to tell it, Simmias. But to prove it true, I think, would be too hard even for Glaucus's skill. I doubt if I could do it, and even if I had the knowledge, my life now seems too short for so long an argument. But there's nothing to stop me from telling what I believe the earth's shape is like and the places it has." e

"That will do," said Simmias.

"Well, first of all," said Socrates, "if the earth is a sphere in the middle of heaven, I believe it needs neither air nor any other such force to keep it from falling. Its own equilibrium 109 and the sky's complete similarity to itself are sufficient to hold it in place. A balanced thing placed in the center of a uniform thing will, being self-similar, have no tendency to move, but remain stationary. That, then, is my first conviction."

"A correct one too," said Simmias.

"Secondly, I believe, the earth is huge, and we who live between the Phasis River and the Pillars of Heracles[27] inhabit b only a tiny portion of it, settled around the sea like ants or frogs around a swamp. And many other peoples inhabit many similar places because the earth is completely covered with hollows, diverse both in shape and in size, into which flow water, mist, and air. The earth itself, however, is pure and rests where the stars are: in the pure heaven, which most authorities call ether. Air, mist, and water are the ether's c sediment and settle in the hollows of the earth. We, inhabiting the hollows, fail to perceive the earth's true situation and imagine ourselves living on top, just as people living on the ocean floor would suppose themselves living on top of the sea; and viewing the sun and the other stars through the water, they would believe that the sea was the sky because their weakness and torpor would prevent them from reaching d the surface and stretching up to see how much fairer and

[26] **It is** uncertain which Glaucus is intended. Perhaps Glaucus of Samos, who was credited with the invention of welding.

[27] **The traditional** boundaries of the civilized world for the Greeks. The Phasis flows into the east side of the Black Sea near Poti; the Pillars of Heracles are the Straits of Gibralter. The "sea" is the Mediterranean.

purer our region is than their own, or from ever hearing about it from someone else who had seen it.

"The same thing happens to us. We live in a hollow of the earth and think we live above, and we call the air heaven, as though the stars moved through it. This is the same situation
e because our weakness and torpor prevent us from going up to the surface of the air. If a man could grow wings and fly to the top, he could stretch up and see, like a fish leaping out of the water to view the things here, the things over there; and he would know, if his nature were strong enough to endure the sight, that that was the true sky and the light and the earth.
110 This earth, the stones here, and our entire region have been corrupted and eaten away, as in the sea things get eaten by brine; nothing worth mentioning grows; and wherever there's earth you find nothing but caves, sand, slime, and implacable mud, which are nothing compared to our beauties here. But the contrast between the things up there
b and the ones down here would appear even greater. If I may tell you a story, Simmias, it should be worth hearing what it's really like up there on the earth under the sky."

"We'd enjoy hearing it, Socrates."

"Well, my companion, if you contemplate the earth itself from above, they say it looks like one of those balls made of twelve different-colored patches of leather, and its colors make the colors that painters use here look like samples.
c There the whole earth consists of such colors, much purer and brighter than ours. One patch is an amazingly beautiful purple, another yellow, another whiter than chalk or snow, and so on for more numerous and beautiful colors than we've ever seen. Even these hollows, filled with air and water,
d present a form of color as they glisten amid the other colors, so that the earth's form appears as one continuous, mottled pattern.

"Such is the earth, they say, and on it grow plants of analogous beauty: trees, fruits, and flowers. It likewise has mountains, and rocks correspondingly beautiful in their clarity, smoothness, and color, of which our precious stones, such as cornelians, jaspers, and emeralds, are but lovely
e fragments. There they all are like that, but even more beautiful, because those rocks are pure, not corrupted and eaten away like ours by rot, salt, and those elements that settle down here and infect our rocks and our earth and all plants and animals here with ugliness and disease. The true earth is

adorned with all those ornaments and with silver and gold and similar beauties, which lie naturally exposed because 111
they're many and large and completely cover the earth, which makes it one of the happiest sights.

"And many animals, including men, live up there, some of them inland, some around the air as we around the sea, others on islands lying close to the mainland and washed by the air. In a word, what water and the sea are to us for our use, the air is to them for theirs, and what air is to us, ether is to them. Their climate is so temperate that they live free from disease b
and much longer than we, and they excel us in seeing, hearing, thinking, and everything else by as much as air is purer than water and ether purer than air. And they have sacred groves and temples which are truly inhabited by gods, whose voices and prophecies they hear and whom they perceive and commune with directly. The sun and the moon c
and the stars appear to them as they are, and everything else coincides to make their happiness complete.

"Such is the nature of both the earth as a whole and its features. And numerous regions, they say, occupy the hollows all around the earth; some deeper and wider than the one in which we live, some with a deeper and narrower gorge than d
ours, others shallower and broader. These gorges penetrate the earth and connect with each other by wider or narrower passages, and they have outlets through which they pour much water out of and into each other like bowls. And gigantic, ever-flowing rivers of hot and cold waters flow under the ground. There is also much fire and great rivers of fire, and many rivers of mud, some clearer and some more turbid, as in Sicily rivers of mud flow before the lava, and then e
the lava itself.

"These substances flow around to the various regions and flood them, moving up and down like a seesaw inside the earth. The seesaw's nature is something like this: One of the earth's chasms is otherwise the largest and penetrates the 112
entire earth. This is the one Homer refers to when he says, 'Far below, where the abyss lies deepest under the ground.'[28] Elsewhere he and many other poets call this abyss 'Tartarus.' All the rivers flow into and out of that chasm, each becoming like the earth that it flows through. They all flow in and out of there because the liquid has no foundation or bottom. b

[28] **The quotation** is from *Iliad* 8.14.

Therefore it seesaws up and down in continual waves, and the air and the wind around it do the same, following the liquid as it rushes now to the earth's far side and now to its near; and as in breathing we inhale and exhale a constant flow of air, so there the air undulates with the liquid and creates terrific blasts as it moves in and out.

c "When the water recedes to the region called 'down,' they say, the streams flow into the places on the far side of the earth, filling them as if pumped. And when it leaves there and surges back here, it fills these streams again, which swell and flow through their channels and through the earth and reach the places to which they've been led: seas, lakes, rivers, and
d springs. After traversing, some of them numerous regions in an extensive circuit, others fewer places in a more limited round, they again enter the earth and fall back into Tartarus, some at a point much lower than where they came out, others only a little lower. But all flow in lower than they flowed out, many on the side opposite their outlets, many on the same side. Some go completely around in a circle, once or several times, spiraling in the earth like snakes until they've dropped
e as low as they can and fall back into Tartarus. They can descend from either side as far as the center, but no farther, because either side of center lies uphill to both sets of streams.

"There are many large and multifarious streams, but four of these many, they say, are the largest. The largest of these flows in a circle farthest from the center and is called Ocean. Directly opposite it and flowing in the opposite direction is the Acheron,[29] which traverses other desolate regions and
113 then dips underground to reach the Acherusian lake, where the souls of most of the dead arrive and remain for certain ordained times—some shorter, some longer—before being sent out to be born again as living creatures. The third river, emerging between those two, falls near its mouth into a large place burning with fire, and forms a lake bigger than our sea, boiling with water and mud. From there it recedes in a circle,
b turbid and muddy, and coils around in the earth, touching numerous places, including the shores of the Acherusian lake; but it does not mingle its waters. After winding several times under the ground, it issues at a lower point of Tartarus. This river is called Pyriphlegethon,[30] and lava streams spout

[29] "Woe."
[30] "Flame."

up fragments of it wherever they appear on the earth. The fourth river bursts out opposite to Pyriphlegethon and empties into a wild and terrible place, they say, all blue-gray, like lapis lazuli. They call this the Stygian river, and the lake c
that it forms the Styx.[31] After falling into the lake this river picks up terrible force, dives back into the earth, coils contrary to Pyriphlegethon, and meets it head on in the Acherusian lake. It also mingles with no other water, and it too circles around, then plunges into Tartarus opposite to Pyriphlegethon. The name of this fourth river, say the poets, is Cocytus.[32]

"Such is the nature of those regions, and when the dead d
arrive at the place to which each one's guiding deity brings him, they are first judged for the piety and beauty of their lives. And those found to have lived unexceptional lives proceed to the Acheron, board certain boats that await them, and cross to the lake where they live until they're purified and absolved, suffering punishment for any crimes they committed and winning honors for their good deeds, each according to his merits. But those judged incurable by the e
enormity of their crimes—great and frequent sacrilege, lawless murders, and other transgressions—a fitting dispensation hurls them into Tartarus, whence they never return.

"Those, on the other hand, found to have committed great
but curable crimes—violence against parents, for instance, 114
perpetrated in anger and bringing lifelong remorse, or murders committed in passion—those too are necessarily plunged into Tartarus, where they remain for a year until a wave washes them out, the murderers to Cocytus and wailing, the parricides to Pyriphlegethon and flame. And when the rivers carry them to the Acherusian lake, they shout and cry out to the ones they killed or assaulted, imploring and beseeching them to let them step out and be taken into the b
lake. And if they persuade them, they emerge and cease from their suffering; if not, they're again swept back into Tartarus and back to the rivers, and they find no rest from this torment until they persuade their victims. For this is the penalty imposed upon them by the judges.

"Those judged, however, to have led lives distinctively

[31] **"Hate."**
[32] **"Wailing."**

pious are freed from these underground regions, released
c from them as from jail, and ascend to pure habitations where they live on the earth. And the ones sufficiently purified in philosophy live entirely without bodies for all future time and go to homes even more splendid than those, which would be hard to describe even if my time should suffice. But for the sake of what we've already described, Simmias, we must do all in our power to partake of knowledge and excellence in this life. For the prize is beautiful, and great is the hope.

d "To insist that these things are just as I have described them would not be the act of a sensible man. But to believe either this or something much like it concerning our souls and their dwellings—since the soul has been proven immortal—that seems to me to be a fitting belief and one worth taking a chance on—because the risk is beautiful—and we must sing these things to ourselves like incantations, which is why I've drawn the tale out to such length.

"That, then, is why a man must have confidence for his
e soul—whoever in this life has spurned the pleasures of the body and its adornment as alien things that do more harm than good and has pursued instead the pleasures of learning, adorning his soul with ornaments not alien, but proper to
115 it—temperance, justice, courage, freedom, and truth—and so awaits the journey to Hades. You, Simmias and Cebes and the rest of you," he said, "will each make this journey at some later time. But now 'my appointed hour calls,' as a tragic hero might say, and it's nearly time for my bath. I think it best to bathe before drinking the poison to spare the women the trouble of washing a corpse."

b When he had finished, Crito spoke: "Well, Socrates. Now, do you have some request to make of me or these others about your sons or anything else? What can we do that would especially please you?"

"Nothing new, Crito," he replied. "Just what I've always said: If you care for yourselves you'll please me and mine and yourselves whatever you do, even if you don't promise it now. But if you neglect your own selves and refuse to live following the trail of our present discussion and of our earlier ones, you'll accomplish nothing, no matter how many fervent
c promises you make at the moment."

"We'll be eager to do as you say," said Crito. "But how shall we bury you?"

"However you like," he said, "—if you can catch me and I

don't slip away from you." He chuckled quietly, then looked at us and said: "Gentlemen, I can't persuade Crito that I am the Socrates who is talking with you and marshaling these arguments. He thinks I am that body he'll soon see as a corpse, and he asks how he should bury me. That long speech d
I just made—how after drinking the poison I'll no longer be with you but leave to enjoy certain happinesses enjoyed by the blessed—seems to have been wasted on him, though I made it to console both you and myself. Therefore I want you to give Crito the opposite security that he gave the jury: He swore to them that I would stay here; now you swear to him that after I die I won't stay here but depart, so that he'll take it e
more lightly and not grieve for my sake when he sees me being cremated or buried, as though I were suffering something terrible, or say at my funeral that he is laying out Socrates or following or burying me. You must understand, my excellent Crito, that speaking falsely is not only an error in itself; it also puts evil in our souls. So you must be of good cheer and say it's my body you're burying and bury it however you think best and most customary." 116

With that he got up and went into another room to bathe. Crito followed him and told us to wait. So we waited, discussing and going back over what had been said, and sometimes dwelling on the great misfortune that had befallen us; we felt we would live like orphans deprived of their father for the rest of our lives. After he had bathed and his children had been brought to him—he had two little sons and a big b
one—and the family women had come in and he had talked with them in the presence of Crito and made his requests, he told them to leave and came back to us. He had spent a long time inside, and it was now close to sunset. He returned clean from the bath and sat down, and little was said after that. A servant of the Eleven came in and went over to him. "Socrates," he said, "I know I won't have to blame you like c
the others for getting angry and cursing me when I have to inform them from the officials that it's time for the poison. Since you've been here, I've found you to be the noblest, gentlest, best man we've ever had in here, and I know you're not angry with me but with those you realize are responsible. And now—you know what I've come for. Goodbye; try to bear this necessity as lightly as you can." He burst into tears, d
turned, and started to leave.

Socrates looked after him. "I'll do that," he said, "and

goodbye to you." Then he turned back to us. "What an excellent man!" he said. "All the while I've been here, he would come in and see me, talk with me sometimes, and was always the most civil of men; and now how nobly he weeps for me. But come, Crito, let's do as he says. Have them bring the poison if it's ground. If it's not, tell the man to grind it."

e "But Socrates," said Crito, "I think the sun is still on the mountains and hasn't gone down yet. Anyway, I know of others who've put it off for a long time after it was announced, eating and drinking merrily and even sleeping with the ones they love. So don't hurry. There's still time."

"It's reasonable for them to do that, Crito," said Socrates, "—they think they profit by it. It's also reasonable for me not
117 to do it, because I think a short delay will bring me no other profit than contempt in my own eyes for clutching at life and being thrifty when there's nothing to save. So please do as I say, Crito."

Crito nodded to the slave standing near him. The boy went out, and after a long wait he came back with the poisoner, who was carrying a cup full of poison. Socrates looked at the fellow and said: "You understand these things, my good man. What must I do?"

"Just drink the poison and walk around until your legs feel
b heavy, and then lie down. The rest will take care of itself." He handed him the cup.

Socrates took it, Echecrates, and calmly, without trembling or turning pale or changing his expression, but simply staring in his usual wide-eyed way, he asked the man: "What about pouring a libation from this? May I?"

"We only ground as much as we thought you should drink, Socrates."

c "I see," he said. "Still, I suppose one may—even must—pray to the gods that the move from here to there be a fortunate one. That's what I pray for; may it be granted." And raising the cup he lightly and cheerfully drained it. Until then most of us had held back our tears pretty well, but when we saw him drink, we no longer could do so. I was so overcome that I burst into tears, buried my face in my cloak, and wept for myself—not for him, but for my own misfortune
d at losing a companion like him. Crito had already got up and moved away when he found he could no longer keep back his tears, and Apollodorus, who had been crying all along, now burst into such loud weeping and complaining that no one

could keep from breaking down except Socrates himself.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you surprise me. That's why I sent the women away—to avoid jarring scenes like this because e
I've heard that one ought to die in peace. So control yourselves and keep quiet."

We were ashamed and restrained ourselves. Socrates walked around until he said his legs felt heavy, then lay down on his back as he had been told. The man who had given him the poison felt his feet and legs from time to time to test them, and finally he pinched his foot hard and asked if he felt it. Socrates said no. Next he squeezed his calves, and so on up his 118
legs, showing us how they were setting and growing cold, and he said when it reached his heart he'd be gone.

When the cold had spread about to his waist, Socrates uncovered his head—he had covered it earlier—and spoke for the last time: "Crito," he said, "we owe Asclepius a rooster. Please see that he gets it."[33]

"I will," said Crito. "Do you have anything else to say?"

But there was no reply, and a little while later he shuddered and then lay still. The man uncovered him, and his eyes were set. Crito closed his mouth and his eyes.

That was the end of our companion, Echecrates, a man who in our experience was the best, the wisest, and the most just of his time.

[33] **Asclepius** was the god of healing. It was customary to sacrifice a rooster to him after recovering from a serious illness, which in Socrates' case must be life.